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ABSTRACT

This report examines the perspectives of parents, staff, and experts on the definition of quality early education and care in New Zealand. Participants included families and staff from four types of centers: kindergarten, play centers, childcare centers, and Te Kohanga Reo centers. Three data collection methods were used: questionnaires, group discussions, and observational assessment of center quality. The views of early childhood education experts on quality were compare with those of parents and staff. The report consists of four chapters. The first two chapters provide background information and information on objectives of the study, methodology used, and characteristics of the centers and groups of people in the study. Findings are presented in Chapter 3. They show that parent and staff ratings of the importance of various program goals were linked to their definitions of and views on center quality. The most important goals of an early childhood program for parents and staff were to provide a safe, secure environment and warm loving care, and to encourage the development of confidence, interaction with peers, and independence. Chapter 4 concludes that quality in early education and care is a value issue as well as an empirical issue. Different perspectives provide insights and valuable information to support the promotion of quality of early childhood services. Appended are a list of 45 references and related materials. (GLR)

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# *Quality is in the eye of the beholder*

## The nature of early childhood centre quality

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*Research Report No. 2 to the Ministry of Education*

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December, 1991

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# Executive Summary

## The Project and This Report

This report provides an examination of the perspectives of different groups (parents, staff, and experts) and different types of centres on "quality" early education and care. It also looks at actual practices of quality in centres.

It is the second report from the larger project entitled "The nature of quality in early childhood centres: A study of charter development content and practice". The first report, released earlier this year, specifically looked at how the government's introduction of charter requirements affected early childhood centres and participants. At the same time as investigating the charter development process in a sample of kindergartens, playcentres, and childcare centres, I collected data on staff, parents', and outside experts' perspectives on quality early education and care and observed the quality of each centre programme. In addition, from two Kohanga Reo some parents and staff contributed their views by participating in a survey.

The background and purpose of the report is explained in Chapter One with a review of the literature and an outline of the early childhood scene in New Zealand.

Chapter Two describes the main objectives of the study and the methodology used. The procedures employed to select the centres and study participants, collect and analyse the data are detailed. The main characteristics of the centres and various groups of people in the study are outlined.

The findings are presented in Chapter Three. Section 3.1 reports how parents came to choose their centre, their needs for child care, the activities they engaged in when their child attended, and their involvements with their centre. It also reports some background information about the staff - their reasons for choosing to work in the early childhood field, the kinds of responsibilities they held, and their satisfaction with their work.

The goals of early education and care are examined from the perspectives of staff and parents in Section 3.2. The differences and similarities in their values and the extent to which these are shaped by their type of early childhood centre are examined.

Parents' and staff own descriptions of a good-quality centre are summarized in Section 3.3. This section also contains a quantitative analysis of parent, staff, and expert ratings of the importance of various criteria to ensure a good-quality centre. Statistically significant differences are noted between the three groups, and between parents' and staff mean rating scores at each type of centre.

Section 3.4 examines the special quality of the services provided by the kindergartens, childcare centres, and playcentres. Quotes from the discussions of centre representatives are included to illustrate what they concluded to be the distinguishing quality characteristics of their particular type of centre.

Parents' and staff personal perceptions of centre quality are reported in Section 3.5. This includes what they liked and didn't like about their centre and their ratings of how well their centre met various quality criteria. Statistically significant differences between parent and staff ratings and across the four types of centres are identified.

Centres were observed to see how well they met various quality criteria (the same criteria which parents and staff were surveyed on), and the findings are presented and discussed in Section 3.6. The congruency between researcher and staff observational ratings are also examined in this Section.

The results chapter is concluded with a look at the relationship between the importance of various quality criteria for parents and staff the actual practices of their centres.

In Chapter Four there is a brief summary of the key findings, along with the main conclusions from the study and mention of some possible implications and future directions.

## Sample and Methods

From four different types of centres, eleven centres in total, 223 families and 32 staff in the Otago region participated. Parents and staff completed survey questionnaires, representatives attended research meetings, and the quality of centres was observed and assessed by two observers and head staff members. The sample includes two Kohanga Reo, at which 12 parents and two kaiako were surveyed. "Experts" (n = 47) from around New Zealand were surveyed, to compare their views on quality with those of parents and staff.

## Some Key Points from the Study's Findings

(1) There was some variation amongst families at different types of centres in their characteristics, particularly in regard to parent education and family income.

(2) Staff characteristics differed mainly in respect to age (tendency for younger staff in childcare centres), education, and training qualifications in early education and care.

(3) Parent and staff ratings of the importance of various programme goals were linked to their definitions and views on centre quality.

(4) The very most important goals of an early childhood programme for parents and staff were to:
- provide a safe and secure environment,
- provide children with warm loving care,
- encourage children to develop confidence in themselves and their abilities,
- encourage children to mix and to get along with one another, and
- encourage children's independence from adults.

(5) A large and complex matrix of human and physical environment variables were perceived by staff, parents, and experts to comprise the quality of an early childhood centre.

(6) The most important ingredients of centre quality for all three groups were:
- staff who are warm and caring people,
- staff who are responsive to children's social bids and needs,
- staff who show children that they really care about them,
- a safe environment,
- developmentally appropriate activities,
- a team-work approach amongst staff, and
- parents and families always feel welcomed.

(7) Additional ingredients of quality were identified to be of special interest to each of the groups, and to the different types of centres.

(8) Parent education and the practice of home-visiting was viewed to be minimally important, and either not wanted or not viewed to be practical by staff and parents. This has implications for the government's Parents' As First Teachers' scheme.

(9) Some differences between the parents' perspective and staff and experts' perspectives on quality raise questions about parents' rights, staff-parent collaboration, and the freedom of the early childhood professional.

(10) Ways of training staff to be more effective in gaining parents' respect and confidence to successfully fulfil a parent support role need to be urgently addressed.

(11) The study shows that quality in early education and care is not just an empirical issue, but a value issue also. A multidimensional view of quality is important. Finding out different perspectives can provide interesting insights and valuable information to support the quest to ensure and promote the quality of early childhood services.

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# Chapter 1 - Background

## 1.1 Introduction

*"New Zealand early childhood constituency has been characterised by diversity. Diversity has been both its strengths and its weakness. Now that government policy is to fund early childhood services on an equitable basis and to require all services to meet the same minimum standards, one of the problems that is beginning to emerge is a tendency by officials to 'homogenize' the services".*

*"It seems to me that John Dewey's precept that ... "What the best and wisest parent wants for her child, that must the community want for all its children" is undoubtedly well-supported in New Zealand .... Equally clearly, however, the road to "our goals" is still not wholly smooth; the cogs still need oiling. All early childhood educators - parents, staff and bureaucrats - must continue to assess and evaluate".*

Dr. Anne Meade (1990, pp 11 -12)
"Beware of feeling satisfied with progress".

This study examines the concept of quality early childhood education and care from the perspectives of staff and parents in four different types of early childhood services, as well as the perspective of "experts" in the field. The study also seeks to determine how such views of quality relate to the observed quality in early childhood centres.

This study of values, perceptions and practice of quality in different early childhood services was carried out during a period of substantial change in early childhood policy in New Zealand. Centres were making changes to comply with proposed new licensing standards. Parents, staff, and managers at many early childhood centres were engaged in consultation and charter preparation as this was required to qualify for government funding. Funding of the early childhood sector had been increased by 65% during the 1989/90 period.

What constitutes "quality" early education and care has been a major issue in developmental psychology and early childhood education since the eighties (Phillips & Howes, 1987). Most research has been carried out to examine isolated aspects of early childhood centres which have a positive effect on various measures of children's development and to investigate centre variables that can be regulated.

The National Day Care Study (Ruopp, Travers, Glantz, & Coelen, 1979) was a landmark study in the field of early childhood research. It focussed not on the concern of the day, as to whether or not childcare was healthy or harmful to children, but on the aspects of early childhood centre experience that best predict positive outcomes in children. It was sponsored by the United States Federal Government to provide information to guide the construction of national child care standards.

To date the bulk of research has been carried out in the United States. Approaches have been almost entirely empirical, with an unwritten assumption that the findings are universally valid across cultures and countries. Shelley (1982) cautions about the danger of making decisions about centres and their programmes based on definitions of quality developed through scientific reasoning rather than though an understanding of community educational values. She discusses how some compensatory education programmes in the United States were closed because public values and value conflicts on what constituted acceptable and culturally relevant early education practices were ignored and scientific/academic reasoning prevailed.

A multi-perspective study of the nature of quality in early childhood centres could help to fill the gap in the international literature for research from an interdisciplinary value-based perspective. It could also provide useful insights into what constitutes quality within the New Zealand early childhood context.

The view in this report is that quality cannot be seen purely as an objective issue to be defined by science. Karmel (1985) argues that quality in education is "complex and value-laden". Quality is a multidimensional construct and can be viewed from many perspectives. Defining quality occurs in a cultural and society-specific context. The values and views of participants in those contexts are important components of how early childhood centres operate and how early childhood policies must evolve if they are to be successful (Farquhar, 1990).

The perspectives of participants in early education and care are taken into account in the study to widen our understanding of what quality means in the early childhood centre context. Examining peoples values about quality is theoretically necessary because the predominant approach in the past has been from the "science" of child development, and this has come under increasing attack (Holloway, 1991; Powell, 1982; Silin, 1987). Lamb and Sternberg (in press) argue that it is:

> *"... impossible to write a recipe for high quality care that is universally applicable. High quality care needs to be defined with respect to the characteristics and needs of children and families in specific societies and subcultures rather than in terms of universal dimensions".*

The study is directly applicable to the early childhood field because it focuses on the complexity, detail, and texture of early childhood centre quality. Powell (1982) points out that a major problem in the development of an early childhood profession is the lack of research data relevant to practice and recognised in the field. Research that is integrated with practice and involves staff should result in better articulation of early childhood practices that positively affect children. It should also lead to more knowledgeable staff who can self-assess these practices (VanderVen and Mattingly, 1981).

The study should have useful implications for public policy. It should help policy-makers be more aware of the diverse and the common perspectives on provisions and practices of quality early education and care. Change in the direction of improving quality will be easier to attain if there is an understanding of the providers' and consumers' perspectives (see the above quote of Meade, 1990).

New Zealand has always prided itself on the diversity of its early childhood services. This was articulated very well by the Hon. Russell Marshall, Minister of Education in his address at the first ever forum on early childhood education and care in 1985:

> *"Mosaics are comprised of individual pieces - like the early childhood world. It too comprises a diverse array of individual groups, organizations and services. As pieces of the mosaic you differ in size, in composition, in colour, in philosophy and in texture. And no one would want to change your individuality. It's unique. It's worth cherishing - it's one of the strengths of the early childhood movement .... Yet an assortment of pieces does not make a mosaic. A mosaic must be planned, designed, ordered and made".*

This study should illuminate in more detail a little of the mosaic of early childhood centre philosophy and beliefs in New Zealand and how these are reflected in the quality of practice and participants' experiences.

## 1.2 Literature Review

There is growing evidence of the benefits of high quality programmes for children (Howes, 1986; Smith and Swain, 1988). Children who attend programmes defined as higher quality in terms of structural characteristics (for example, smaller group-size, better staff-child ratios, and trained staff) spend more time in positive interaction and less time wandering aimlessly around (Vandell & Powers, 1983). A high level of verbal stimulation by staff (a process characteristic) is linked to children's higher performance on measures of language development (McCartney, 1984). Good-quality early childhood intervention programmes result in "at risk" children being more likely to complete their high school education, gain employment and have a stable family life (Berrueta-Clement, Barnett, Schweinhart, Epstein, & Weikart 1984). Evidence is also emerging of benefits for families of access to good-quality early childhood services. For example, centres that provide affordable "worry-free" quality child care reduce parents' stress from juggling childrearing, household, and employment responsibilities (Shinn, Oritiz-Torres, Morris, Simko, & Wong, 1989; Galinsky, 1988).

Bettye Caldwell (1984), an established international researcher, has described the field as representing the applied science of child development. Reviews of research support her claim, showing that the majority of research has been carried out from a child development, psychological perspective (Howes, 1986; Smith & Swain, 1988). This perspective takes for granted that middle-class Western standards of human development are universal - which they clearly are not (Silin, 1987). Theories and concepts of child development are based upon Arnold Gesell's norms and ideas derived from a population of children whose parents were at Yale University. Generalization of these to all children does not take environmental influences of socio-economic status, ethnic group experiences nor culturally based learning styles into account (Lee, 1989). Even if it were possible to articulate developmental goals applicable to all cultures and groups, the achievement of these depends on the social or cultural meaning given to a behaviour. Silin (1987, p. 26) suggests that the psychological perspective is inadequate on its own and that an interdisciplinary perspective would provide richer, more pertinent insights:

> *"If education is about initiating the young into an already existing world, if it is to teach them not only how to live but also what the world is really like, then psychological process considerations are probably insufficient to the task".*

Holloway (1991, p.9) proposes that more complex and pluralistic models of early childhood centre quality should be developed because "a particular feature of a preschool setting becomes desirable or undesirable only in relation to the goals of the caregivers".

Researchers have noted cultural variation in views on good-quality early childhood programmes and desirable staff practices. In Japan, for example, where academic demands on children are high, centre quality is appraised according to how well staff and programmes promote children's language, communication and cognitive skills (Takeuchi, 1981). Class sizes are larger in Japan than in Western countries because it is believed that diminished opportunity for staff-child interaction is better for orienting children towards their peer group and lessening their dependence on staff (Tobin, Wu, & Davidson, 1989).

Carlson and Stenmalm-Sjoblom (1989) in their cross-cultural study of parents' goals found that in Sweden creative internally motivated activities and staff interactions that extend what the child is doing are valued. In the United States, parents place importance on children using colouring books, rote counting and behaving properly. The researchers suggest macro-society influences on parents' views to explain cross-cultural differences in values:

> *"Perhaps, when there is much fear, violence, and uncertainty about the future of a society, as in the United States, parents in that environment seek assurance in conformity and "following the rules". On the other hand, in a secure environment, such as in Sweden, parents are free to value creative, inwardly initiated experiences" (p. 519).*

The need for a clearer understanding of early childhood centre quality in New Zealand is underscored by the trial of a popular, well-tested United States instrument for assessing the quality of early childhood centre environments in some Christchurch childcare centres (Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale: Harms & Clifford, 1980). The findings indicated a need to question the cultural appropriateness of some of the measurement items, the instrument's face validity for practitioners, and its ability to differentiate between the quality of different centres (Farquhar, 1989).

Lero and Kyle (1985) noted in their review of the quality literature that no single definition of early childhood centre quality exists which is adequate. Internationally, there has been little research attention paid to the multiplicity of goals and values which exist. The concept of quality is amorphous and hard to define in any context because people view it differently according to their experience. Cohort and community values effect how the concept is defined. As Common (1987, pp 10 - 11) says, one's perspective on quality is "as much a product of the morality and other values of the times as it is a product of what we know about what we are doing, what we have inherited from our past practices and generations, and what we value".

The complexity of the concept of quality is further apparent when its usage as a noun and as an adjective is considered. First, it may denote the excellence of a centre. Second, it may describe how well a programme is meeting various criteria or be used to grade centres on quality criteria. Third, it may suggest something about the nature or financial worth of inputs, for example the cost of specially made toys or the physical attractiveness of equipment. Fourth, the concept may be used as a philosophical statement about the special features of a particular type of programme. What is defined as "quality" for one type of centre may not be quality for another centre, but this does not mean that one is better than another, it just has a different kind of "quality".

Research provides some insights into the meaning and characteristics of early childhood centre quality in New Zealand. Swain and Swain (1982) examined the nature of early childhood centre quality from the perspective of parents at one Hamilton childcare centre. Delphi methodology was used to explore parents definitions of good child care and to develop consensus on the most important aspects. Social-emotional dimensions were found to be valued most. Two items were rated high in importance by every parent in their study: staff show warmth, caring and a genuine concern for children, and the centre is a warm and comfortable place. The researchers concluded that "family characteristics (ideal ones, perhaps?)" are key components of quality for childcare families.

Kennedy, Ratcliff, and Henry (1990) researched New Zealand's nine Mobile Pre-school Units and their findings point to certain characteristics of the service's quality. Staff-child interaction and staff-parent interaction occurred often and on a one-to-one basis because of low child-staff ratios. The M.P.U.s provided an optimum learning environment particularly for younger children because of a high staff-child ratio and the high standard of educational equipment. However, they provided a less optimum learning environment for children approaching school age, due to problems such as the limited range of equipment that could be carried in vans. Their study also explored parents' views on the quality of the M.P.U. service in terms of how well it was meeting their and their children's needs.

Smith and Hubbard (1988) examined parent-staff communication in Dunedin childcare centres and kindergartens. They found a higher frequency of talk between childcare parents and staff on topics such as children's activities and problems at home, than between kindergarten parents and staff. Staff at kindergartens and childcare centres emphasised the advantages of promotion of children's language development and provision of a non sex-stereotyped environment more than parents did. Parents rated preparation of children for school and getting children used to paying attention to adults higher than staff did.

Six Wellington playcentre, kindergarten and childcare programmes were studied by Meade (1985). She observed programmes and in particular the nature of staff behaviour and interactions. Some relevant findings were as follows. Staff beliefs about what is important to provide and to be doing were found to be reflected in how they apportioned their time. Boys tended to receive less attention than girls, as did children who had family problems or had English as a second language. The educational programmes of childcare centres were similar to kindergarten and playcentre. ,Childcare staff tended to spend more daily time attending to children's physical needs than did staff at other centre types. Staff with training qualifications tended to do more to foster children's learning than untrained adults. Large group size (number of children) were associated with less staff-child contact regardless of staff/child ratio.

Bell (1990) identified the operational theories of six staff in a Palmerston North kindergarten and childcare centre. She examined the adequacy of their theories in relation to observed practice. Staff interviews revealed that they were mostly interested in promoting children's development in the psycho-social domain, and only two mentioned the cognitive domain. Staff explicitly reinforced children's socially appropriate behaviour even though their espoused belief was that their role was non-interventionist. Bell argued that staff need to be more self-reflective if they are to resolve inconsistencies between their operational theories and close the 'gaps' between their beliefs and actual practices.

## *1.3 An Outline of Four Main Early Childhood Services*

The majority of New Zealand's children attend some form of early childhood programme before starting school. A Department of Statistics report (1990) suggests that internationally New Zealand has a very high early childhood education participation rate. Of the total estimated population of four to five year olds in 1990, 96 percent were estimated to be attending an early childhood service. The percentage of younger children enrolled was also estimated to be very high, 70.7 percent of three to four year olds and 36.3 percent of two to three year olds (Ministry of Education, 1991).

The New Zealand early childhood sector is characterised by its diversity. About 26 different types of services operate. The four main ones are kindergartens, playcentre, licensed childcare centres, and Nga Kohanga Reo.

Ministry of Education (1991) statistics show that kindergarten is the largest service catering for 59.4 percent of all four to five year old children and 25.4 percent of all three to four year old children. Childcare is the second largest service with 16.7 percent of all four to five year olds, 23.1 percent of all three to four year olds and 16.3 percent of all two to three year olds. Playcentre is the third largest service, and has about the same number of children in the two to three year old age bracket as in the three to four year old age group (11% and 11.8% respectively). Playcentre has 9.2 percent of all four to five year olds. Nga Kohanga Reo is the fourth largest service and has relatively similar numbers of children attending in the two to three year old (4.6%), three to four year old (5.5%) and four to five year old (4.9%) age groups.

The kindergarten movement is the oldest one; the first kindergarten opened in 1889 in Dunedin. Government legislation was passed in 1959 to recognize the New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union as the management body. Kindergartens are mainly state funded. Senior teachers, responsible for providing support and advice to teachers in their geographical area, provide the main means of internal quality assurance. Parent committee's also provide a form of quality control because teachers are accountable to their committee.

The playcentre movement emerged and developed in strength as a parent co-operative during the Second World War years. There was considerable resistance within the movement to government funding. However, playcentres today accept funding and want equitable funding with other early childhood services; whilst still retaining their voluntary basis through significant parent input. Parents are recruited within the movement to train as supervisors. Staff usually comprise of one or two supervisors and rostered parent-helps, although group supervision by parents occurs in some North Island playcentres. Internal quality assurance mechanisms are regular playcentre Parent Council meetings (which every parent is a member of) and regular visits from playcentre liaison officers.

Childcare centres were officially defined by the promulgation of the Childcare Centre Regulations (1960). Many different types of childcare centres operate, for example: part and full-day centres, and centres at sports complexes or churches. Historical problems of social stigma and lack of funding and public support have hampered the development of quality childcare. There has been tremendous change in public policy in regards to the childcare service over the last five to six years. Once described as the "Cinderella" of early childhood services (May, 1985), it now receives more equitable funding and has been officially recognised as an educational rather than a custodial service.

A fourth major early childhood movement grew from the initiative of Maori people who were concerned about the decreasing numbers of fluent speakers and the inadequacy of educational programmes for meeting their cultural aspirations. The first Te Kohanga Reo (language nest) was opened in April 1982. There are now over 630 centres, and the number continues to grow. Like playcentre, parent participation is central to Te Kohanga Reo operation. At the time of study, the National Kohanga Reo Trust co-ordinated training programmes, administered funding and bonus funding for centres that met quality criteria related to the movement's aims (for example: the number of children under two years of age, male teachers, smoking by adults only outside the kohanga reo, and teacher's language fluency).

## *1.4 Public Interest, Involvement and Changes*

Early childhood services have been of public interest for many years. In 1947, 1971, and 1988 Government-appointed committees considered issues such as participation by Maori and rural groups and the fragmentation, cost, availability, and quality of services.

During the early 1980s the government experienced considerable pressure to do more towards quality assurance from a number of different early childhood groups, feminist groups and trade unions. In 1985/6 a number of changes were introduced by the Labour Government, including: tightening and revision of the Child Care Regulations (1960), transfer of responsibility for childcare administration from the Department of Social Welfare to the Department of Education, and opening up of courses in Teachers' Colleges (now Colleges of Education) to childcare trainees.

The Labour Government affirmed its commitment to promoting the quality, affordability, and accessibility of early childhood education and care after its re-election in 1987. A working party, chaired by Dr. Anne Meade, was commissioned to prepare a report on the early childhood sector and to make recommendations. Implementation of the "*Before Five*" document policies, developed from the recommendations of the Meade Working Group, began from 1 October 1989. All early childhood centres received a Management Handbook containing proposed minimum licensing standards to start working towards compliance with, and guidelines to prepare a charter if they wanted to receive funding.

Government legislation for minimum standards was not passed until September 1990. The delay affected the promulgation of charter standards and the deadline for charter approval was extended to 30 June 1991. Te Kohanga Reo came under the Ministry for chartering just before the government election in October 1990.

The present National Government, like the past Labour Government, have espoused a commitment to securing and promoting quality early education and care. An extract from the government's recent Budget night statement gives some indication as to their perspective and intended approach:

> *"It (the government) was concerned that the regulations for property and for staffing ratios, training, and qualifications were too strict and made it unnecessarily difficult for providers to offer early childhood education at a reasonable cost. In making the necessary changes, the government has been careful to secure the quality of early childhood education, and the health and safety of children" (Smith, 1991, p. 18).*

The study on early childhood centre quality is timely in terms of public policy interest and concerns. Because the Ministry of Education has as its key mission "to promote high quality education for all" the research should be relevant to Ministry officials in their task of working with early childhood centre managements. Moreover, research that helps to identify and examine what is special about early childhood programmes should be a useful resource for early childhood groups in their politicking for appropriate regulations and funding.

# Chapter Two - Methodology

## 2.1 Rationale for the Method

In the early childhood research field a multimethod research design has been argued to be most appropriate (Meade, 1985: Porter, 1982: Shelley, 1982). A multimethod view of the problem of examining the nature of early childhood centre quality was taken in the study for two reasons. First, more and different kinds of information than any single method could have provided was required. Second, the use of multiple methods was considered necessary to provide a firmer empirical base for the findings (Brewer and Hunter, 1989).

To try to use the most appropriate approaches to address the research objectives the methodology was developed in consideration of the New Zealand early childhood scene and needs for particular types of information on the topic of quality. Also, the methodologies of other early childhood centre studies were taken into consideration, the techniques used by others to generate opinion and value data were studied, and the general literature on the evaluation and improvement of educational programmes was reviewed.

The "Delphi Round" technique was used by Swain and Swain (1982) in their study of childcare parents' views on quality early education and care. This technique has been used by researchers to address a wide variety of social, political and educational problems, where the main source of data is people's experience and beliefs (Weaver, 1972). A typical Delphi study consists of a series of rounds of data collection (usually by way of anonymous questionnaires) interspersed with feedback from each round. The pedagogic value of the Delphi can be high. Participants are involved in a process of reflection and feedback on their own and others' points of view. Swain and Swain carried out three rounds of data collection. First they asked parents to list characteristics of a good childcare centre. Then, feedback on parents responses was provided and they were asked to list any further characteristics. Finally, parents were asked to rate the 64 items generated on a scale of importance. The researchers identified the components of childcare which were most important to the parents and developed a definition of good-quality childcare based on this.

The study reported here has implemented some Delphi principles. The specific aim of the study, however, was not to generate consensus data but to examine people's values and perspectives, and how these relate to practice. Data was obtained from different groups of people and a variety of data collection methods were used. Feedback to participants from one method was only linked to that method. The intention was that a "picture" of the nature of early childhood centre quality would develop by bringing together the different sets of data to write-up the final results.

An accreditation system for centres with a high standard of quality has been developed by a branch of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in the United States. It took four years to develop accreditation criteria that represent the consensus of early childhood professionals and academics (Bredekamp, 1990). The criteria cover ten broad areas: interactions among staff and children, curriculum, staff-parent interactions, staff qualifications and development, administration, staffing, physical environment, health and safety, nutrition and food services, and evaluation. Underpinning the accreditation system is the belief that programme quality is best enhanced when staff engage in self-study, have the necessary tools and the external support to do this.

Self-study seems to facilitate clarification of values and beliefs. The practice encourages people to compare what they want, what they think they are doing, and what they are actually doing in reality. For example, Hedin and Ekholm (1989) found that a data-feedback method used by childcare staff in Sweden helped to improve the quality of their work. In New Zealand, feedback of findings on staff behaviour and centre quality have been useful to staff for increasing their awareness of practices and examining what they do (Farquhar, 1989; Smith & Haggerty, 1979).

Feedback of findings as part of the research process was a methodological principle of the study. Participants were involved in self-reflection and centre study in a number of ways: completing questionnaires, meeting with participants from other centres, and assessing centre quality using a Quality Review Checklist based on the design of the NAEYC accreditation checklist.

## 2.2 Research Objectives

The objectives and sub-objectives for the study were to:

(1) Find out how parents' chose their centre, their needs and involvements.

(2) Identify staff reasons for working in the field, what their work involved and concerns they may have about this.

(3) Identify and examine parents' and staff goals for early education and care:

(a) the importance of various goals to them;

(b) the differences and similarities between their ratings of the importance of various goals;

(c) the differences and similarities between their ratings of the importance of various goals at different centres;

(4) Explore people's views on what is important to assure good-quality early education and care:

(a) parent and staff definitions of a good-quality centre;

(b) parent, staff and "expert" views on the importance of different criteria to assure a good-quality centre;

(c) the differences and similarities among parent, staff, and expert ratings of the importance of various quality criteria;

(d) the differences and similarities between the quality criteria ratings of parents and staff at the different centres.

(5) Examine what defines the quality of the different centres in terms of the type of service they provide.

(6) Find out how parents and staff perceive the quality of their centres:

(a) their likes and dislikes;

(b) how they rate their centre on various criteria;

(c) the differences and similarities among parent and staff centre ratings;

(d) the difference and similarities between the centre ratings of parents and staff at the different centres.

(7) Assess centre quality using an observation instrument:

(a) the differences and similarities in centre levels of quality on various observation criteria;

(b) the congruency between researcher (external) and head staff person (internal) observational ratings of centre quality.

(8) Examine the relationship between staff and parent ratings of the importance of various quality criteria and the observed quality of centres on the same criteria.

## 2.3 The Sample

### 2.3.1 Centres

Eleven Otago centres participated: four kindergartens, three childcare centres, two playcentres, and two Kohanga Reo. A twelfth centre, a private childcare centre which had been opened for just over a year, withdrew from this particular section of the study. The proprietor/supervisor gave permission for data collected on the impact of charter development requirements only to be reported (See Project Report No. 1).

A small number of Te Kohanga Reo were operating in the area and discussed with members of the District Trust to be likely to welcome involvement in a research study. Panui's introducing the research project were given to the whanau of four Kohanga Reo. Two whanau committees agreed to be involved. Of the two Kohanga Reo one was located in a central city area and operated rent free from a converted house owned by a public institution, the other was located on a Marae in a semi-rural area. The city kohanga had two kaiako (teachers). One kaiako was a native speaker and responsible for the older age group. The second kaiako was not a fluent speaker and responsible for the babies and toddlers. The city kohanga was open full-time five days a week and had approximately 25 children. The semi-rural kohanga had one kaiako who was learning to speak Maori. She had been appointed for just three months when data collection commenced. This kohanga was open three full days a week and had up to 17 children. Both kohanga had babies through to 5 year olds enrolled.

Decisions on which kindergartens, playcentres, and childcare centres to sample were made in consultation with different people who visit centres, such as Early Childhood Development Unit staff, a Ministry of Education Liaison Officer, and a Child Care Area Training Supervisor. It was decided that centres be selected to provide diversity in: type of management, number of years of operation, programme philosophy, location and staffing characteristics. Three kindergartens were in city suburbs and one on the outskirts of town. One kindergarten had a small group of special needs children and a specialist teacher who took this group on specific mornings. Another kindergarten had a full-daycare facility attached (although this had closed in the new year, when data collection commenced). One was relatively new, while another was one of the longest established in New Zealand. One kindergarten had a 30/30 roll of children (30 in the morning and another 30 in the afternoon) and the other three kindergartens had a 40/40 roll. Two of the 40/40 roll kindergartens did not have full rolls. One 40/40 kindergarten had three teachers because of the large size of the centre premises. The children enrolled at the kindergartens were over three and a half years old.

The playcentres were both situated beside primary schools: one in a semi-rural service area and the other near the centre of town on a busy street. One playcentre was housed in a new classroom building modified for the early childhood age group. The second playcentre shared an old school building with another early childhood group. A kindergarten-trained supervisor was employed at one playcentre, and two playcentre-trained parents worked alternate mornings at the second playcentre. They had both been open for over five years. The playcentres operated three to four mornings a week and had rolls of between 13 to 15 children. Children over two and a half years were enrolled, although some younger children accompanied by their parents also attended.

The three childcare centres were situated in the inner city area and outlying suburbs. All three were full-day centres and had some children attending part-time. One centre was housed in a public institution and operated for the institution's staff and parents from the general public who were referred to them. The second centre was privately owned and the third was operated by a community preschool association; they were both housed in converted wooden homes. Between 25 to 42 children were enrolled at the centres. One centre had been operating for approximately 18 months while the other two had been established for over five years. All three centres had a mixture of babies, toddlers, and older children enrolled.

### 2.3.2 Families

A total of 223 families participated. The response rate to the parents' survey was very high at the playcentres (n = 26, 96.3% respondents) and modest at the kindergartens and childcare centres (n = 130, 56.39%, and n = 55, 60.44%, respectively). The low response rate of parents at the Kohanga Reo (n = 12, 28.57% respondents) means that the findings should be interpreted with caution. Table 1 presents statistical information on the respondents' characteristics.

## TABLE 1.

*Parent and Family Characteristics*

| | Kindergarten | | Childcare | | Playcentre | | Kohanga | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| No. Respondents | 130, | 58.3 | 55, | 24.7 | 26, | 11.7 | 12, | 5.4 | 223, | 100 |
| **Family Structure** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Single parent | 21, | 16.2 | 8, | 14.5 | 2, | 7.7 | 5, | 41.7 | 36, | 16 |
| Duel parent | 106, | 81.5 | 45, | 81.8 | 23, | 88.5 | 6, | 50.0 | 180, | 81 |
| plus relations | 2, | 1.5 | 1, | 1.8 | 1, | 3.8 | 1, | 8.3 | 5, | 2 |
| or live-in nanny | 1, | .8 | 1, | 1.8 | none | | none | | 2, | .5 |
| **Gross Family Annual Income 1989/90** | | | | | | | | | | |
| under $10,000 | 5, | 3.8 | 1, | 1.8 | none | | none | | 6, | 3 |
| $10,000 - $30,000 | 49, | 37.7 | 13, | 23.6 | 13, | 50.0 | 8, | 66.7 | 83, | 37 |
| $31,000 - $50,000 | 49, | 37.7 | 23, | 41.8 | 6, | 23.1 | none | | 78 | 35 |
| over $50,000 | 9, | 6.9 | 14, | 25.5 | 2, | 7.7 | 1, | 8.3 | 26, | 12 |
| Did not state | 18, | 13.8 | 4, | 7.3 | 5, | 19.2 | 3, | 25.0 | 30, | 13 |
| **Respondent's Highest School Qualifications** | | | | | | | | | | |
| No school qualifications | 29, | 22.3 | 4, | 7.3 | 5, | 19.2 | 4, | 33.3 | 42, | 19 |
| School Certificate | 32, | 24.6 | 7, | 12.7 | 6, | 23.1 | 2, | 16.7 | 47, | 21 |
| 6th or 7th Form qual. | 67, | 51.5 | 43, | 78.2 | 15, | 57.7 | 5, | 41.7 | 130, | 58 |
| Did not state | 2, | 1.5 | 1, | 1.8 | none | | 1, | 8.3 | 4, | 2 |
| **Respondent's Highest Tertiary Qualification** | | | | | | | | | | |
| None | 73, | 56.2 | 12, | 21.8 | 14, | 53.8 | 9, | 75.0 | 108, | 48 |
| Professional e.g. nursing | 25, | 19.2 | 16, | 21.1 | 4, | 15.4 | 2, | 16.7 | 47, | 21 |
| Trade e.g. hairdressing | 18, | 13.8 | 5, | 9.1 | 2, | 7.7 | 1, | 8.3 | 26, | 12 |
| University degree | 8, | 6.2 | 9, | 16.4 | 3, | 11.5 | none | | 20, | 9 |
| Post-graduate degree | 4, | 3.1 | 12, | 21.8 | 3, | 11.5 | none | | 19, | 9 |
| Did not state | 2, | 1.5 | 1, | 1.8 | none | | none | | 3, | 1 |
| **Number of Months Child has been Attending (respondents' oldest child at centre)** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Under 1 month | 28, | 21.5 | 7, | 12.7 | 6, | 23.1 | 1, | 8.3 | 42, | 19 |
| 1 to 6 months | 38, | 29.1 | 12, | 21.8 | 4, | 15.2 | 2, | 16.6 | 56, | 25 |
| 7 to 12 months | 41, | 31.6 | 8, | 14.5 | 5, | 19.2 | 2, | 16.6 | 56, | 25 |
| 13 to 24 months | 21, | 16.2 | 19, | 34.5 | 9, | 34.6 | 4, | 33.4 | 53, | 24 |
| over 24 months | 1, | .8 | 7, | 12.7 | 2, | 7.7 | 3, | 24.9 | 13, | 6 |
| Did not state | 1, | .8 | 2, | 3.6 | none | | none | | 3, | 1 |
| **Number of Mornings and Afternoons Child Usually Attends** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Up to 3 | 56, | 43.1 | 10, | 18.2 | 23, | 88.4 | 3, | 25.0 | 92, | 41 |
| 4 to 5 | 74, | 56.9 | 12, | 21.8 | 3, | 11.5 | 1, | 8.3 | 90, | 40 |
| 6 to 10 | none | | 33, | 60.0 | none | | 8, | 66.6 | 41, | 18 |
| **Child's Ethnic Group** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Pakeha - New Zealander | 109, | 83.8 | 43, | 78.2 | 17, | 65.4 | 1, | 8.3 | 170, | 76 |
| Maori | 2, | 1.5 | 1, | 1.8 | none | | 10, | 83.3 | 13, | 6 |
| Pacific Islander | 2, | 1.5 | 1, | 1.8 | 1, | 3.8 | 1, | 8.3 | 5, | 2 |
| Other | 1, | .8 | 1, | 1.8 | 2, | 7.7 | none | | 4, | 2 |
| Did not state | 16, | 12.3 | 9, | 16.4 | 6, | 23.1 | none | | 31, | 14 |
| **Whether Child has Special Needs** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Yes | 9, | 6.9 | 4, | 7.4 | 2, | 7.7 | 2, | 16.7 | 17, | 8 |

On the survey questionnaire it was indicated that one or more parents and caregivers could participate. The majority of respondents were mothers and a small percentage of couples and fathers responded. Questionnaires completed by the couples all provided demographic information about the mother, but only two about the father. In these cases the mother was taken to be the respondent because data provided about the father was incomplete.

Most families were two parent families, and only a small percentage were single-parent families. The Kohanga Reo had a larger percentage of single parent families compared to the other centres, while the percentage of two-parent families at playcentre was slightly higher.

Some families lived on a small income, between $5,000 to $20,000 gross in the 1989/90 year. The majority of families lived on over $20,000 and up to $40,000.

A trend in the data suggests that childcare parents received a higher income and were better educated at school and tertiary levels, than parents at the other centres. A slightly higher percentage of kindergarten parents held professional or trade qualifications than parents at other centres.

Playcentre and kindergarten had higher turnovers of children than the other centres, with a greater percentage of children recently enrolled. Childcare and kohanga parents used (had available to them) a greater number of sessions.

Most children were Pakeha; few were Maori or Pacific Islanders, except at the Kohanga Reo which had the majority of Maori children.

All centres had some special needs children attending. The range of special needs included speech problems, hearing difficulties, weak muscle problem, brain damage, food allergies, and hyperactivity.

### *2.3.3 Staff*

A total of 32 staff participated (86.49% of recognized and paid staff at the eleven centres). A high percentage of childcare staff (56.2%) are represented in the total sample as staff-child ratios were lower at other centres. Three staff from a playcentre (that employed two supervisors) responded. Both the past and the replacing supervisor completed questionnaires because of a change in staff during the month of data collection. Table 2 shows statistical details about the staff sample.

**TABLE 2.**

*Staff Characteristics*

| | Kindergarten | Childcare | Playcentre | Kohanga | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | n % | n % | n % | n % | n % |
| Total Staff | 8, 25.0 | 18, 56.2 | 4, 12.5 | 2, 6.3 | 32, 100 |
| **Sex** | | | | | |
| Male | none | 1, 5.6 | none | none | 1, 3 |
| Female | 8, 100.0 | 17, 94.4 | 4, 100.0 | 2, 100.0 | 31, 97 |
| **Parenthood Status** | | | | | |
| Yes, have child(ren) | 6, 75.0 | 14, 77.8 | 4, 100.0 | 2, 100.0 | 26, 81 |
| No | 2, 25.0 | 4, 22.2 | none | none | 6, 19 |
| **Age** | | | | | |
| Under 20 years | none | 1, 5.6 | none | none | 1, 3 |
| 20 - 25 years | none | 3, 16.7 | none | none | 3, 9 |
| 26 - 30 years | 1, 12.5 | 2, 11.1 | none | none | 3, 9 |
| 31 - 35 years | 2, 25.0 | 2, 11.1 | 3, 75.0 | none | 7, 22 |
| 36 - 40 years | 3, 37.5 | 3, 16.7 | none | 1, 50.0 | 7, 22 |
| 41 - 45 years | 1, 12.5 | 6, 33.3 | none | none | 7, 22 |
| Over 45 years | 1, 12.5 | 1, 5.6 | 1, 25.0 | 1, 50.0 | 4, 13 |
| **Ethnic Group** | | | | | |
| Pakeha - NZ'er | 8, 100.0 | 15, 83.3 | 4, 100.0 | none | 27, 84 |
| Maori | none | 1, 5.6 | none | 2, 100.0 | 3, 9 |
| Other | none | 2, 11.1 | none | none | 2, 6 |
| **Highest School Qualifications** | | | | | |
| None | none | 4, 22.2 | 1, 25.0 | 2, 100.0 | 7, 22 |
| School Certificate | 1, 12.5 | 5, 27.8 | none | none | 6, 19 |
| 6th or 7th Form qual. | 7, 87.5 | 9, 50.0 | 3, 75.0 | none | 19, 59 |
| **Highest Early Childhood Qualification** | | | | | |
| None | none | 6, 33.3 | none | 2, 100.0 | 8, 25 |
| Overseas qual. | none | 2, 11.1 | none | none | 2, 6 |
| Primary Teachers' | none | 1, 5.6 | none | none | 1, 3 |
| Playcentre Certificate | none | 1, 5.6 | 3, 75.0 | none | 4, 13 |
| Certificate in ECE | none | 2, 11.1 | none | none | 2, 6 |
| N.Z.C.A. Certificate | none | 2, 11.1 | none | none | 2, 6 |
| N.Z.F.K.U. Diploma | 8, 100.0 | 4, 22.2 | 1, 25.0 | none | 13, 41 |
| **Number of Months at Present Centre** | | | | | |
| Under 1 month | 1, 12.5 | none | none | none | 1, 3 |
| 1 to 6 months | none | 1, 5.6 | 1, 25.0 | none | 2, 6 |
| 7 to 12 months | 1, 12.5 | 4, 22.2 | 1, 25.0 | 1, 50.0 | 7, 22 |
| 13 to 24 months | 1, 12.5 | 6, 33.3 | 2, 50.0 | none | 9, 28 |
| 25 to 36 months | 2, 25.0 | 4, 22.2 | none | none | 6, 19 |
| over 36 months | 3, 37.5 | 3, 16.7 | none | 1, 50.0 | 7, 22 |

The staff were women, except for one man who was employed at a childcare centre. Most staff were parents.

The majority of staff were over 30 years of age. The widest spread in ages was amongst childcare staff, and childcare staff tended to be younger in age than staff at the other centres.

Most staff were New Zealanders: Pakeha and some were Maori. A very small percentage of staff were immigrants from countries such as Canada and America.

Their level of school attainment varied. All kindergarten teachers had some kind of school qualification, whereas all kohanga kaiako and about one quarter of childcare and playcentre staff had none.

One quarter of all staff held no recognized early childhood pre- or inservice training qualification. Kindergarten and playcentre staff were all qualified but not all childcare staff and no kohanga staff.

The lower percentage of qualified staff in childcare may be linked to their younger age and lower levels of high school academic achievement.

The older age, no high school qualifications and early childhood qualifications amongst kohanga staff reflects the emphasis in Te Kohanga Reo kaupapa (philosophy) on Maori language fluency and life/cultural knowledge and experience as key requirements rather than formal paper qualifications.

Staff do not tend to stay for long at their centres. Only seven staff (22%) had stayed for more than three years. The longest staying staff member was a kindergarten head teacher who had been at her centre for six years.

## 2.3.4 Experts

"Expert", for the purpose of the study, is a name which will be used to describe people who are recognized by nature of their work or public role to have academic, professional, or administrative expertise. They can be involved in areas such as staff training, research, advising or implementing government policies.

A total of 35 experts from throughout New Zealand were asked to participate. Two did not respond and surprisingly, 47 completed questionnaires were received. This was because some of the experts known to Sarah passed on copies of their questionnaire and letter about the study to others who were known to them.

Their different positions or roles were as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| University or College teaching staff member | (n = 14, 29.8%) |
| Early Childhood Development Unit | (n = 10, 21.3%) |
| Field adviser/Staff trainer | (n = 6, 12.8%) |
| Full-time researcher | (n = 4, 8.5%) |
| Ministry of Education staff | (n = 4, 8.5%) |
| Education Review Office staff | (n = 3, 6.4%) |
| Government policy adviser | (n = 1, 2.1%) |
| Established reputations but not in any above position | (n = 5, 10.6%) |

Most experts were Pakeha (n = 39, 83%) and some were Maori (n = 3, 6.4%). A small number were from other ethnic groups (n = 5, 10.6%), such as Samoan and English.. Only two men responded (4.3%). The majority of respondents were parents (n = 41, 87.2%). On average they had been involved in the early childhood field for a long time (X = 18 years, Std Dev. 9 years).

Not all experts held an early childhood training qualification (n = 10, 21.3%). A few were trained primary school teachers (n = 4, 8.5%). The majority, though, were trained in the early childhood field: Kindergarten Diploma (n = 16, 34%), Playcentre Certificate (n = 14,29.8%), New Zealand Childcare Association Certificate (n = 2, 4.3%), or an overseas early childhood qualification (n = 1, 2.1%).

Experts tended to be in contact with most early childhood groups including Te Kohanga Reo and Pacific Island Language nests (n = 21, 44.7%). Some were only in contact with kindergartens, playcentres, and childcare centres (n = 10 21.3%), and a few only with either kindergarten (n = 4, 8.5%), playcentre (n = 4, 8.5%), or childcare (n = 4, 8.5%). One expert did not have, or maintain, contact with any centres.

## 2.4 Data Collection Methods

Three methods of data collection were used: questionnaires, face-to-face discussions amongst representatives from the centres, and observational assessment of centre quality. Note that a Maori research co-worker, Karina, was employed to carry out all phases of the research in the Kohanga Reo, including the preparation and presentation of a paper on the findings. As a mother and a member of the whanau of a Kohanga Reo she was familiar with Kohanga Reo and accepted by parents and staff.

### 2.4.1 Questionnaires

Two draft questionnaires, one for staff and one for parents, were prepared after a review of the research literature and a scan of recent relevant public policy documents and articles written by people in the early childhood field. The questionnaires underwent several reviews, by Sarah, her university supervisors, and the director of the University Nursery School Association. Modifications were made for Kohanga Reo after a review by Karina indicated the need for changes to some of the language to ensure clarity of concepts and questions, and to replace some English nouns with Maori words (for example, food become kai, and children became tamariki).

The questionnaires were divided into three sections.(1)

The first section contained a mixture of open-ended questions (to encourage detailed responses), and partially-closed questions (to enable some quantifying of responses). Staff were asked about their work experiences, and parents were asked about their experiences of the centre and staff. Both staff and parents were asked questions on what they were most and least happy with about their centre and to describe a good-quality early childhood centre.

The second section asked parents and staff to rate the individual importance of a list of goals and possible criteria of good-quality centres using a four point rating scale of "4" = important, "3" important, "2" moderately important, and "1" = not important. They were also asked to rate how well their centre met each of the various possible criteria of good-quality using a three-point scale of "3" = met, "2" = partially met and "1" = not met".

The list of quality criteria were mostly derived from an extensive review of the empirical literature. Some were obtained from an analysis of the 1989 charter guidelines for required content in charters and expected practices (namely: biculturalism, staffing policies, provision for children with special needs, and parent/community involvement). Discussions with people in the early childhood field also provided some New Zealand specific indicators of quality (namely: parent education and home-visiting).

The third section asked demographic and background information on the respondents.

The experts' questionnaire contained questions asking them to rate the importance of various quality criteria (the same criteria also listed in the parent and staff questionnaires) and to provide some demographic and background information about themselves.

### 2.4.2 Group discussions

Three evening meetings of parent, staff and management representatives from the kindergartens, playcentres, and childcare centres were organized as part of the larger study. Management representatives were either directors, proprietors or committee members. Usually at least one parent or committee representative and one (often two) staff/directors from each centre attended. Time was allocated for discussions on what constituted good-quality programmes and services in the nine centres represented.

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(1) Appendix 1a contains the parent questionnaire, Appendix 1b contains section one and three of the staff questionnaire which differed from the parent questionnaire, and Appendix 1c contains part of the experts questionnaire that was not in common with other questionnaires.

Two centres, the Kohanga Reo, were not involved because the evening meetings also focused on experiences of charter development which was not relevant to Te Kohanga Reo at the time. Time constraints for carrying out and completing the study have meant that only questionnaire survey data from Kohanga Reo parents and kaiako was obtained. Although permission from the District Trust (who informed the Southland Island members of the Taurima team and the National Trust) was given early on in the study, permission to study was not granted by each whanau committee until after the second discussion meeting and some six months (half-way) into data collection process.

### 2.4.3 *Observation instrument*

An observational assessment instrument (called the Quality Review Checklist: QRC) was developed using the same quality criteria that were listed in parent, staff, and expert questionnaires. The written format was based on the Centre Accreditation Instrument developed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children in the United states. A copy of the QRC is contained in Appendix 2a.

The QRC was drafted only for use in kindergarten, playcentre, and childcare centre settings. The quality assessment criteria were categorized into five sections in the QRC instrument: Children's Happiness, Health, Hygiene and Safety; Programme, Staffing, and Links with Parents, Family and Community. Item definitions were written to provide guidance on what to observe and to help to ensure consistency of rating decisions across centres and raters.

A set of interview questions for parents and another for staff members in charge were compiled and included as part of the QRC instrument. Asking parents and staff some direct questions seemed to be the only way to confirm observations and to find out information about aspects that were not easily observable (e.g. the quality of parent-staff relationships). In addition, direct questioning was considered necessary to fill the gaps in observation notes when certain things can not be observed at the time for reasons such bad weather (limiting observation of out-door play) or no new children starting (limiting observation of settling-in procedures).

Centres were to be rated on a four-point rating scale, of "4" = fully met, 3 = mostly met, "2" = partially met, and "1" = not met, on the 56 different criteria contained in the QRC after observations and interviews.

The QRC was piloted by a childcare director who completed it and noted any comprehension and implementation problems. The QRC was also piloted by Sarah and a co-observer (Trish Inder) at the same childcare centre for one full-day. The reliability of their ratings was reasonably high (78% agreement). The QRC was revised based on piloting.

## 2.5 Data Collection Process

### 2.5.1 Time-line for data collection

1989 December
- Pamphlet describing study sent out to centres.
- Further meetings with representative organizations.
- Negotiations to study successful at ten kindergartens, childcare centres, and playcentres (one childcare centre withdraw from the section of the study presented in this report)

1990 February/March
- Parent and staff questionnaires distributed and collected at kindergartens, playcentres, and childcare centres.
- First research centre-group meeting at University.

April/August
- Second approach to Kohanga Reo and permission by whanau at two kohanga granted.
- Second research centre-group meeting at University.
- Questionnaires distributed at the Kohanga Reo and Maori research co-worker spent time at each Kohanga Reo.

September
- Observation of centres.
- Experts questionnaires distributed.

October
- Follow-up meetings with head staff members to compare observation ratings.

November
- Third research centre-group meeting at University.

December 1991
- Final report of results submitted to the Ministry of Education.

### 2.5.2 Questionnaires

Experts were posted a survey questionnaire, a covering letter explaining the study, and a stamped addressed envelope for the return of the questionnaire.

The head staff person or nominated person at the kindergartens, childcare centres and playcentres took responsibility for handing out parent and staff questionnaires and collecting completed ones. An envelope was attached to each questionnaire for the respondent to place their completed questionnaire in and seal for confidentiality. Parents were asked to return their questionnaire within a three week period. Sarah kept in telephone contact with the head staff person and periodically collected questionnaires as they were received.

Response rates at two childcare centres were very low at the end of the three week time limit. Permission was sought from the managers and head staff members to approach families again by individually posting them a questionnaire with a request to participate. An improved response rate occurred. Approximately three times the number of completed questionnaires were received through the second approach.

Discussions with Maori University teachers suggested a more personal approach to data collection would be culturally appropriate in the two Kohanga Reo. The secretary of the city Kohanga Reo arranged a whanau meeting at which parents (as a group) could discuss the questionnaire and any queries could be answered. However, only four parents attended this meeting and another meeting was not able to be arranged because the secretary had expressed difficulty in finding a time convenient to parents. Sarah attended this meeting because Karina was unable to make it. Feedback after the meeting suggested that parents would be more receptive to Karina, as a Maori woman, and we decided that it would be best for only Karina to collect the data. After a few weeks, Karina negotiated to spend about a week helping in the programme. The intention of doing this was to enable any assisting parents to take time out from their duties to complete a questionnaire. Feedback suggested that her time and assistance at the kohanga was welcomed, but she obtained only four more completed parent questionnaires and one kaiako (teacher) questionnaire.

The whanau committee of the semi-rural Kohanga Reo indicated that it was not necessary for Karina to make daily trips out because the secretary would take responsibility for distributing questionnaires. A few weeks later when Karina phoned she learnt that this had not been done. She suggested that it would help to spend a couple of days with them, which the secretary and kaiako agreed with. Four completed parent questionnaires and one kaiako questionnaire were received.

### 2.5.3 *Group discussions*

The relevant questions centre representatives were asked to discuss in their sub-groups according to their type of centre and later in a whole group situation, were:

- how do you define a "good-quality" early childhood centre"? and,
- what characteristics define the special quality of your type of centre, that is, the features that are valued and unique to your particular service?

Sub-groups were asked to nominate a member to keep a written record of group discussion as part of the data collection process. Whole group discussions were tape recorded using two recorders and long-range microphones placed near the front and to one side of the room. All participants knew that tape-recorders were being used and that the purpose of this was to free Sarah to give full attention to listening to and facilitating discussion rather than trying to write it all down.

### 2.5.4 *Quality Review Checklist*

The QRC was implemented near the end of the data collection process. Sarah telephoned the head staff members of the kindergartens, playcentres, and childcare centres to explain that a method of observing centre quality was being developed and could she and a co-observer spend some time observing and asking questions at their centre.

Each centre was observed from the start of sessions (to observe arrival routines) until the end of sessions. Sarah and Trisch adopted a casual appearance and approach. They often joined in and played with the children or chatted with staff. The QRC rating sheets were sometimes carried around by them to make on the spot ratings, but they took the role of "students" (which they both were) rather than "assessors" to reduce possible effects on the "normal" programme and participant behaviour. They usually withdrew to the staff-room or to a playroom corner to make their ratings and write notes on their observations.

Five parents were approached (trying to include at least one father, and grandparent or nanny) and asked some quick questions about the centre and how they found it. Sarah and Trisch jointly interviewed parents, and recorded their responses on copies of the QRC interview sheets. The staff member in charge (and any other staff members if they wished to join in) were interviewed during their lunch-hour and at the end of the day. Trisch and Sarah met after observing at each centre and consolidated their ratings of centre quality to provide a single rating on each QRC criteria.

After observations were completed, head staff members were given a copy of the QRC instrument and asked to rate their own centre on the criteria. All, except one childcare centre director did this. The childcare centre director initially said she would but after a number of phone calls and a follow-up visit she explained that she did not have the time to do it.

A profile of each centre's quality was prepared to be shared and discussed with staff (see Appendix 2b for an example). Sarah returned to each centre and discussed the process, and differences and similarities in observation ratings and their ratings with the head staff member (and any other staff).

## 2.6 *Analysis*

Questionnaire data was analysed in two ways. For the open questions lists of responses under each question were prepared, categories were established, and responses were grouped and counted. Quantitative data was coded and statistically analysed using SSPSx on the university VAX computer.

Means, standard deviations and percentages were obtained on the demographic data for experts, staff and parents. Means and standard deviations were obtained for questionnaire data on goals, item ratings of quality importance, ratings of centres on these and QRC observation scores.

T-test and one-way analysis of variance procedures were used to test for the statistical significance of respondents' mean ratings of the importance of goals and criteria of a good-quality centre. The Scheffe' procedure was used to test for significant differences between two or more groups (parents, staff, and experts, or different types of centres). It was used because it is a conservative test, requiring larger group mean differences than any other multiple comparison method for simple contrasts. It is particularly appropriate when groups have widely differing numbers of cases.

The mean parent and staff ratings of the importance of the different quality criteria for each centre were correlated with their centre's mean QRC scores.

Data analysis was on-going during the research process as opportunities were built-in for reciprocal feedback between Sarah and the study participants. At the final centre group discussion meeting, participants were given a written summary of data collected from the first two meetings. Sarah made corrections and added to it during discussion. The kindergartens, playcentres, and childcare centres all received individual copies of parent questionnaire results. Feedback from the centres was welcomed and contributed towards writing the final report.

The low parent response rate from the two Kohanga Reo meant that feedback of data might have too easily lead to the identification of respondent's individual responses. A paper which combined parent and kaiako responses from both Kohanga Reo was prepared and given to the kohanga. Note that in the Results Section, analysis of variance figures for the Kohanga Reo sample might be somewhat misleading and should be interpreted with caution because of large differences in the size of sample groups.

# Chapter Three

# Findings

## 3.1 Parents' and Staff Choices, Activities, and Needs

### 3.1.1 Parents' knowledge of services and centre selection

For the majority of parents (n = 115, 51.6%) word-of-mouth was the primary means by which they first heard about their centre. Friends, neighbours, casual acquaintances, and the local diary owner were sources of information.

A number of parents (n = 47, 21.7%) did not find out about their centre through someone else. These parents lived in the area, noticed the centre when passing during their travels, or they had always known about it for as long as they could remember.

A small percentage of parents (n = 26, 11.7%) were referred to their centre. A few parents were recommended to enrol by their child's plunket nurse or doctor. However, most referrals were made by staff at other centres. For example, one parent was referred to her present childcare centre because her child was child was too young to start kindergarten. Some referrals were made between kindergartens, when this was needed by parents to ensure quick entry on to the roll of a kindergarten in their new area.

Advertisements, such as a poster on a supermarket noticeboard, were cited by some parents (n = 15, 6.7%) as the means by which they first heard about their centre. Some parents (n = 11, 5%) were initially told about their centre by members of their family, such as sisters or uncles. Other parents mentioned that they knew about their centre before they had needed to enrol at it, for example a parent visited her present centre as part of a university assignment some years earlier (n = 7, 3.1%).

Just over half of the parents (n = 117, 52.5%) looked at other centres first and the reminder did not explore other options. One centre, a playcentre, was located in a rural township and no early childhood centres were available within that township; although in the main city (fifteen to twenty minutes by car) there was a selection of different early childhood services.

Factors of physical convenience, hours, and cost were reasons behind many parents' selection of a particular centre (n = 120, 53.8% parents). A number of parents decided on their centre after visiting it and liking what they saw (n = 104, 46.6). For example, what pleased two different parents were the "friendly people" and "lots of good toys".

Reasons for deciding upon their centre, mentioned by smaller numbers of parents, were a short waiting list or immediate vacancies (n = 29, 13%), and personal recommendation from other parents who had used it (n = 22, 9.9%).

### 3.1.2 Parent's child care needs

The majority of families (n = 161, 72.2%) relied only on their centre and used no other form of formal child care assistance.

Families who used an additional form of child care (n = 60, 27%) did so for reasons of giving their child additional education opportunities or because their centre's hours were not long enough, for example:

- one kindergarten parent in full-time paid employment took her child to a childcare centre when the kindergarten closed for holidays;
- another kindergarten parent took her child to a Montessori centre for a few sessions a week because it provided "a better style of pre-school education";
- a playcentre parent had a private child-minder come to her home on a regular basis "to preserve my sanity";
- a kohanga parent took her child to a Tongan Language nest to learn to speak Tongan; and
- a childcare parent took her child to a family day-carer for part of the week because her child was "too young to be in a group situation full-time and individual care is important".

### *3.1.3 Parents' activities*

So what do parents tend to do whilst their child is at centre? They mainly stayed at home and did activities such as housework or catching up on sleep (n = 139, 62.3%). Many also worked or attended further education classes (n = 110, 49.3%). Some spent time at their centre helping or observing (n = 65, 29.1%), and some engaged in leisure activities such as visiting friends and attending aerobics classes (n = 36, 16.1%).

A large number of childcare and kohanga parents worked outside of the home or were involved in doing some kind of educational study (n = 50, 90.9%; and n = 10, 83.3% respectively). The majority of kindergarten parents usually stayed at home or participated in leisure activities (n = 107, 82.3%). Playcentre parents tended to stay at their centre (n = 20, 76.9%).

### *3.1.4 Nature of parent involvement*

Approximately one quarter of the parents (n = 55, 24.7%) did not state any involvements with their centre. All kohanga parents and playcentre parents had some kind of involvement whereas not all childcare and kindergarten parents had (n = 21, 38.2%, and n = 34, 26.2%, respectively).

Of the parents who had some kind of involvement (n = 168, 75.3%) this usually took the forms of:
- helping in the programme (n = 109, 48.9%),
- regularly attending meetings (n = 66, 29.6%),
- providing occasional inputs such as donation of material,
- helping on working-bees and raffle-selling (n = 51, 22.9%),
- occasionally attending meetings (n = 30, 13.5%), and
- being a staff member or manager of their centre (n = 6, 2.7%).

Playcentre and kohanga parents mainly provided assistance as helpers in the programme (n = 23, 88.5%; and n = 8, 66.7% respectively) and regularly attended parent meetings (n = 22, 84.6%; and n = 4, 50% respectively).

Some kindergarten and childcare parents mentioned factors that limited their involvement, such as having:
- recently started at their centre (n = 22),
- younger children at home to care for (n = 10),
- no time to be involved (n = 5), and
- no transport to attend meetings at night (n = 3).

One kindergarten parent mentioned that he had decided not to be involved at committee level because it was female dominated. A childcare parent said that she had resigned from being a member of the management committee because it was too much work and the committee was not supported enough by the parents.

### *3.1.5 Staff reasons for working in the field*

Staff responses to the question of why they chose to work in the early childhood field suggest that they tend to be self-motivated and dedicated people. Reasons relating to personal satisfaction were mentioned most often (n = 27, 84.4%), for example:

> *"I enjoy working with children and get great satisfaction working alongside them" (childcare worker),*
>
> *"Can't fail in my attempts at art and creativity. Enjoy the company of other women" (childcare worker),*
>
> *"I enjoy the close contact with parents" (kindergarten teacher),*
>
> *"Initially because of an interest in young children and I have continued in this field because of the job satisfaction" (childcare director).*

Many staff (n = 15, 46.9%) were committed to their work because they believed in the importance of it, for example two staff members wrote:

> *"A very challenging area knowing that we form the base for future education." (kindergarten teacher)*
>
> *"I believe that appropriate quality childcare is of significant value to young children and of utmost importance to parents." (childcare manager)*

Some staff (n = 10, 31.3%) valued their work because it provided various opportunities for personal development. Here is what staff from two different centres said:

> *"I brought a child to playcentre, found out about training, completed it, took up vacancy for supervisor in own centre. Find work stimulating" (playcentre supervisor),*
>
> *"Develop own personal interest in preschool education. Develop knowledge of education, management skills, communicating and working with families" (kindergarten head teacher).*

Two staff (6.3%) mentioned that they worked in the early childhood field for financial reasons. One playcentre supervisor elaborated by stating that the "pocket money is good".

Limited or no other work choices, given their personal circumstances, were described by two staff members as the main reason why they worked in the early childhood field (6.3%). One staff member stated that her work hours fitted in with her commitments to be at home with her family at certain times. A kaiako's daughter was attending the Kohanga Reo and it was therefore convenient for her to be working at the same place.

### 3.1.6 Staff duties

Early childhood staff had quite varied duties and wide ranging responsibilities depending upon their type of centre and whether they had a leadership or assistant role.

Staff in kindergartens and playcentres reported that their main responsibilities were:
- setting up the environment and activities for children,
- ensuring that sessions ran smoothly,
- talking with parents, and
- directing or assisting parent-helpers.

Some childcare staff also listed these same responsibilities, and all childcare staff stated that they carried out one or more of the following tasks:
- caring for children's physical needs,
- cooking and keeping their centre clean,
- working with a group of children in a specific age-group, and
- planning activities for specific groups of children.

Across the centres, head staff members described further responsibilities of:
- drawing up staff rosters,
- keeping a check on children's hours,
- making budget decisions or liaising between staff and committee in administrative and budget decisions,
- organizing social events for families and/or staff, and
- liaising with special services and schools.

The kaiako at the Kohanga Reo listed their responsibilities as:
- ensuring children's safety,
- caring for children's physical needs, and
- promoting their learning of Maori language.

### 3.1.7 Satisfaction with working conditions

Although staff clearly had a high level of personal commitment to their work, many staff wrote about dissatisfactions with their conditions. Except for one playcentre supervisor and one kaiako, all other staff replied that "yes" their working conditions had not always been, or were not now, totally satisfactory.

Not all staff explained their concern(s), but of the staff who did these were about the need for:
- reassurance that her job was safe (1 childcare director),
- a solution to a wages grievance (1 childcare staff member),
- clarification of conditions of employment (1 playcentre supervisor and 1 childcare staff member),
- general improvements in work conditions (3 kindergarten teachers and 6 childcare staff),
- greater awareness amongst adults that Te Reo Maori (the language) should be spoken in the centre (1 kohanga kaiako),
- management's understanding of the negative effects on staff of proposed changes to the management structure (1 childcare director),
- mutual support between staff (3 childcare staff and 1 kindergarten teacher),
- parents to recognize that staff have needs of their own e.g. that children shouldn't be left over the lunch-hour (1 kindergarten teacher),
- improvements in staff ability to ensure adequate child supervision due to a problem of inadequate staffing in relation to the size of the centre (1 kindergarten teacher), and
- the public to understand the poor working conditions experienced by early childhood staff (2 kindergarten teachers and 3 childcare staff).

# 3.2 Goals

## 3.2.1 The relative importance of different goals

**TABLE 3.**

***Parent and Staff Ratings of the Importance of Various Goals for Early Education and Care.***

| *Goals* | *Parents* | *Staff* | *Significance* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean (S.D.) | Mean (S.D.) | T-Value | p |
| 1 Provide a safe and secure environment | 3.90 (0.36) | 4.00 (0.00) | -4.29 | .00 * |
| 2 Promote development of self-confidence | 3.86 (0.36) | 3.97 (0.18) | -2.73 | .01 * |
| 3. Provide warm loving care | 3.82 (0.52) | 4.00 (0.00) | -5.31 | .00 * |
| 4. Encourage peer relationships | 3.78 (0.46) | 3.88 (0.34) | -1.42 | .16 |
| 5. Encourage independence | 3.68 (0.59) | 3.91 (0.18) | -3.52 | .00 * |
| 6. Meet children's individual needs | 3.56 (0.61) | 4.00 (0.00) | -10.79 | .00 * |
| 7. Promote language development | 3.67 (0.59) | 3.84 (0.37) | -2.30 | .03 * |
| 8. Support children's individual learning characteristics | 3.44 (0.71) | 3.93 (0.25) | -7.34 | .00 * |
| 9. Promote motor-skill development | 3.52 (0.62) | 3.84 (0.37) | -4.25 | .00 * |
| 10. Work in partnership with parents | 3.29 (0.78) | 3.81 (0.40) | -5.95 | .00* |
| 11. Promote aesthetic development | 3.46 (0.70) | 3.63 (0.66) | -1.33 | .19 |
| 12. Promote intellectual development | 3.38 (0.69) | 3.69 (0.54) | -2.96 | .01* |
| 13. Help children to relate to adults | 3.19 (0.80) | 3.53 (0.57) | -3.02 | . 00* |
| 14. Promote own culture and language | 2.88 (0.91) | 3.70 (0.54) | -7.09 | .00* |
| 15. Parent support and friendship | 2.97 (0.85) | 3.60 (0.50) | -5.95 | .00* |
| 16. Promote moral development | 3.11 (0.92) | 3.10 (0.87) | -0.09 | .93 |
| 17. Parent education on child-rearing | 2.51 (0.92) | 3.44 (0.72) | -6.57 | .00* |
| 18. Promote cultural awareness | 2.53 (0.92) | 3.34 (0.79) | -5.32 | .00* |
| 19. Keep children entertained | 2.67 (0.92) | 1.91 (1.06) | 3.86 | .00* |
| 20. Foster compliance with social expectations | 2.36 (1.10) | 1.97 (1.03) | 1.98 | .05 |
| 21. Teach pre-school skills | 2.34 (0.95) | 1.97 (1.03) | 1.92 | .06 |
| 22. Promote spiritual development | 2.27 (1.02) | 2.03 (0.91) | 1.24 | .22 |

* $p < .05$

The importance parents and staff attached to different goals of early childhood education and care, and statistically significant differences between their mean ratings of importance is shown in Table 3 above.

All goals were rated as being of at least some importance as indicated by parents' and staff mean rating scores. None were rated as not important.

There was least agreement among staff and parents on just how important some goals were and this is indicated by the large standard deviation (of over .9) on these:

- teaching preschool skills,
- providing parent education on child-rearing,
- promoting spiritual development,
- fostering compliance with social expectations,
- keeping children entertained,
- promoting of cultural awareness, and
- promoting moral development.

Staff were consistent in their opinion on the level of importance of three goals. All staff gave the maximum rating of "4" to:

- providing warm loving care,
- providing a safe and secure environment, and
- meeting children's individual needs (e.g. for more or less sleep than other children).

The mean parent and staff ratings on the following goals indicate that these were the very most important ones for them:

- providing a safe and secure environment,
- promoting children's self-confidence,
- providing warm loving care,
- encouraging peer relationships, and
- encouraging independence from adults/parents.

Staff mean rating of the goal of supporting children's varied learning characteristics (i.e. providing an individually developmentally appropriate programme) is also very high.

Goals rated as being of only modest importance according to parent and staff mean scores were:

- promoting cultural awareness,
- keeping children entertained,
- fostering children's compliance with social/group expectations,
- preparing children for school through teaching relevant pre-school skills, and
- promoting spiritual development.

Except for one goal, keeping children entertained staff mean rating scores were significantly higher than parents on 15 goals related to children's education, socialisation and links with families. The data, therefore, suggests that staff perceived goals related to parent involvement, links with families, and promotion of children's development as being much more important than parents did. The early childhood centre seems to be perceived more by parents than by staff as a place where children are left by them and minded by staff.

In contrast to parents' mean rating scores, staff rated the following social-emotional goals as significantly more important:

- providing a safe and secure environment,
- providing warm loving care,
- meeting children's individual needs,
- promoting children's self-confidence, and
- encouraging children's independence from others.

Staff mean rating scores of educational goals were also significantly different from parents and indicate that staff placed greater importance on:

- providing an individually appropriate programme,
- promoting language development,
- promoting intellectual development,
- promoting motor-skill development, and
- promoting cultural awareness.

On some goals related to links with parents and family support staff mean ratings of importance were significantly higher than parents:

- providing parent education,
- working in partnership with parents, and
- providing parents with support and friendship.

This finding suggests that parents did not think that the focus of the early childhood centre should include (or be on) them as much as staff did.

Looking at the actual size (not the level of statistical significance), of the differences between parent and staff mean rating scores it is clear that the two groups hold some quite different values. One goal, keeping children entertained, tended to be given a higher rating of importance by parents than by staff. Goals that were much more important for staff than parents (as indicated by a half or more mean point difference) were:

- supporting children's individual learning characteristics,
- working in partnership with parents,
- providing parent education, and
- promoting cultural awareness.

The almost identical parent and staff mean scores on the goal of promoting moral development suggests that parents and staff fully agree on the extent to which this should be important.

### *3.2.2 The importance of different goals between the centres*

One-way analysis of variance was used to test for statistically significant differences between the four types of centres on parent and staff mean ratings of goal importance. Parents' mean ratings on six goals and staff mean ratings on four goals were statistically significant at the .05 level. For these goals the Scheffe' method was used to examine pairwise contrasts between each of the four types of centres.

**TABLE 4**

***Parents' Ratings of the Importance of Various Goals for Early Education and Care, and Statistically Significant Differences Between Centres***

| Goals | Kindergarten | Childcare | Playcentre | Kohanga | Significance | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean (S.D.) | Mean (S.D.) | Mean (S.D.) | Mean (S.D.) | p | Scheffe * |
| Safe and secure setting | 3.87 (0.42) | 3.98 (0.14) | 3.85 (0.37) | 3.92 (0.29) | .22 | None |
| Promote self-confidence | 3.89 (0.32) | 3.82 (0.43) | 3.96 (0.20) | 3.58 (0.52) | .01 | P. K > T |
| Provide warm loving care | 3.72 (0.64) | 3.98 (0.13) | 3.86 (0.33) | 3.92 (0.29) | .01 | C > K |
| Peer relationships | 3.77 (0.00) | 3.84 (0.37) | 3.81 (0.49) | 3.59 (0.67) | .36 | None |
| Encourage independence | 3.72 (0.57) | 3.62 (0.59) | 3.76 (0.52) | 3.33 (0.78) | .13 | None |
| Meet children's needs | 3.48 (0.66) | 3.71 (0.46) | 3.64 (0.57) | 3.58 (0.52) | .11 | None |
| Language development | 3.68 (0.61) | 3.64 (0.59) | 3.73 (0.53) | 3.58 (0.52) | .87 | None |
| Individually appropriate programme | 3.36 (0.77) | 3.55 (0.63) | 3.56 (0.51) | 4.00 (0.00) | .19 | None |
| Motor-skill development | 3.50 (0.64) | 3.63 (0.53) | 3.52 (0.59) | 3.17 (0.72) | .12 | None |
| Partnership with parents | 3.21 (0.80) | 3.42 (0.60) | 3.46 (0.86) | 3.25 (1.06) | .23 | None |
| Aesthetic development | 3.43 (0.73) | 3.48 (0.60) | 3.50 (0.81) | 3.58 (0.52) | .87 | None |
| Intellectual development | 3.39 (0.68) | 3.44 (0.72) | 3.31 (0.74) | 3.17 (0.72) | .60 | None |
| Learn to relate to adults | 3.05 (0.86) | 3.46 (0.63) | 3.27 (0.67) | 3.33 (0.78) | .01 | C > K |
| Promote own culture | 2.73 (0.96) | 3.11 (0.79) | 3.04 (0.82) | 4.00 (0.00) | .01 | None |
| Parent support /friendship | 2.85 (0.91) | 3.06 (0.73) | 3.32 (0.63) | 3.08 (0.90) | .06 | None |
| Moral development | 3.20 (0.87) | 3.04 (0.89) | 2.96 (0.85) | 3.00 (1.04) | .84 | None |
| Parent education | 2.45 (0.94) | 2.26 (0.76) | 3.19 (0.85) | 2.83 (0.94) | .00 | P > C, K |
| Cultural awareness | 2.42 (0.91) | 2.80 (0.93) | 2.54 (0.86) | 2.58 (1.04) | .08 | None |
| Keep children entertained | 2.61 (0.94) | 2.65 (0.89) | 2.77 (0.95) | 3.17 (0.72) | .22 | None |
| Foster compliance with social expectations | 2.45 (1.05) | 1.84 (1.03) | 2.48 (1.12) | 3.58 (0.67) | .00 | T > K, C,<br>P, K > C |
| Teach pre-school skills | 2.40 (0.99) | 2.22 (0.84) | 2.12 (0.97) | 2.67 (0.89) | .25 | None |
| Spiritual development | 2.30 (1.06) | 2.15 (0.82) | 2.29 (1.17) | Did not ask | .65 | None |

* K = Kindergarten, C = Childcare Centre, P = Playcentre, T = Te Kohanga Reo

Table 4 shows some interesting and statistically significant differences between kohanga parents and other parent groups in terms of goals related to socialisation. Note that fostering compliance with group expectations was rated significantly higher in importance by kohanga parents and promoting children's self-confidence was rated significantly lower.

Childcare parents' mean importance ratings were significantly higher than kindergarten parents on the goals of providing children with warm loving care, and opportunities to relate to with other adults (namely caregivers). A reason why childcare parents tended to rate these two goals higher than kindergarten parents might be the longer hours that children in childcare programmes spend with, and in the care of, staff.

In contrast to childcare parents, kindergarten parents rated the goal of helping children learn to be members of a group (i.e. to comply with social norms of behaviour) as significantly more important.

Parent education received a significantly higher mean importance score by playcentre parents, compared to kindergarten and childcare parents. Playcentre parents obviously placed more importance on parent education, and this may be effected by the philosophy of the playcentre movement. Parent support and friendship received a significantly higher mean importance rating from parents at playcentres than at kindergartens, which suggests that playcentre parents viewed this as a more important goal of the early childhood centre than what kindergarten parents did.

Table 5 shows that few significant pairwise differences between staff mean ratings across the different centres were found. This indicates a high level of agreement amongst staff from different centres on the relative importance of their goals. Although ratings by Kohanga Reo staff came out higher than staff from other types centre on three goals, theses statistical differences should be looked upon with extreme caution because on some goals only one of two kaiako provided a rating.

**TABLE 5**

*Staff Ratings of the Importance of Various Goals for Early Education and Care and Statistically Significant Differences Between Centres*

| *Goals* | *Kindergarten* | *Children* | *Playcentre* | *Kohanga* | *Significance* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean (S.D.) | Mean (S.D.) | Mean (S.D.) | Mean ( S.D.) | p | Scheffe * |
| Safe and secure setting | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | | |
| Promote self-confidence | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.75 (0.50) | 4.00 (0.00) | .06 | None |
| Provide warm loving care | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | | |
| Peer relationships | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.83 (0.39) | 3.75 (0.50) | 4.00 (0.00) | .55 | None |
| Encourage independence | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.25 (0.50) | 4.00 (0.00) | .00 | K, C, T > P |
| Meet children's needs | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | | |
| Language development | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.89 (0.32) | 3.50 (0.58) | 4.00 (0.00) | .07 | None |
| Individually appropriate programme | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.89 (0.32) | 4.00 (0.00) | 0.00 (0.00) | .52 | None |
| Motor-skill development | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.83 (0.38) | 3.50 (0.58) | 4.00 (0.00) | .15 | None |
| Partnership with parents | 3.88 (0.35) | 3.78 (0.46) | 3.75 (0.50) | 4.00 (0.00) | .84 | None |
| Aesthetic development | 3.38 (1.06) | 3.72 (0.46) | 3.50 (0.58) | 4.00 (0.00) | .53 | None |
| Intellectual development | 3.75 (0.46) | 3.72 (0.46) | 3.25 (0.96) | 4.00 (0.00) | .33 | None |
| Learn to relate to adults | 3.50 (0.54) | 3.61 (0.50) | 3.00 (0.82) | 4.00 (0.00) | .15 | None |
| Promote own culture | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.67 (0.59) | 3.25 (0.50) | 0.00 (0.00) | .06 | None |
| Parent support and friendship | 3.38 (0.52) | 3.67 (0.49) | 3.50 (0.58) | 4.00 (0.00) | .35 | None |
| Moral development | 3.25 (1.04) | 3.06 (0.80) | 2.33 (0.58) | 4.00 (0.00) | .19 | None |
| Parent education | 3.50 (0.54) | 3.22 (0.81) | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | .14 | None |
| Cultural awareness | 3.50 (0.76) | 3.28 (0.67) | 3.00 (1.41) | 4.00 (0.00) | .48 | None |
| Keep children entertained | 1.38 (0.74) | 1.89 (0.90) | 2.00 (1.41) | 4.00 (0.00) | .01 | T > K, C |
| Foster compliance with social expectations | 1.50 (0.76) | 2.00 (0.97) | 1.75 (0.96) | 4.00 (0.00) | .01 | T > K, C |
| Teach pre-school skills | 1.50 (0.76) | 2.00 (0.84) | 1.75 (1.50) | 4.00 (0.00) | .01 | T > K, C |
| Spiritual development | 1.75 (0.71) | 2.12 (1.05) | 2.25 (0.50) | Did not ask | .58 | None |

* K = Kindergarten, C = Childcare, P = Playcentre, T = Te Kohanga Reo

On the goal of encouraging children's independence (namely from their parents), playcentre parents' mean importance score was significantly lower than that of staff at the other centres. This indicates that playcentre staff were probably not so worried about encouraging independence in children. It also reflects the more family atmosphere of playcentre as all parents participated in the running of the programme and in the operation of their centre (see Section 3.1.4.).

## 3.3 What is Important for Good-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care

### 3.3.1 Definitions of a good-quality centre

In their own unprompted words, parents and staff were asked to describe a good-quality centre. The range and number of quality characteristics mentioned was huge and can not all be reported because of space limitations. Comments ranged from a parent who wrote that a good-quality centre is characterised by "staff being respected in the community" to one who wrote that it would have "a place set aside for mothers to breast-feed". The different characteristics were sorted into eight categories:

- children's happiness,
- safety health and hygiene,
- physical environment,
- programme,
- management policies and practices,
- provisions for parents,
- centre-family relations, and
- centre-community relations.

Parents' descriptions overwhelmingly referred to aspects associated with ensuring children's happiness and the kind of programme that they believed should be provided (n = 345, an average of 1.55 comments, and n = 311, an average of 1.39 comments per parent, respectively). Other quality characteristics, related to ensuring children's safety, health, and hygiene, a suitable physical environment, good staffing, and good relationships with parents and the community, were not mentioned as frequently or in the same quantity by parents.

Under the category of children's happiness the most frequently mentioned characteristics were that:

- staff genuinely care about the children (n = 76, 34%),
- the centre has a happy, warm, friendly, or homely atmosphere (n = 59, 26.45%),
- there is an emphasis on positive child behaviour, such as children not swearing and caring for those who are younger than themselves (n = 42, 18.8%), and
- children's negative behaviour is handled positively (n = 22, 9.8%), for example one parent wrote, "there is no threat of physical punishment by the teachers".

The most frequently mentioned characteristics of a good-quality programme were a range of stimulating activities for children (n = 51, 22.9%), and sufficient play equipment and resources (n = 44, 19.7%).

A small number of parents considered that ideally a centre should meet their needs, including: to meet other parents (n = 2), and for understanding of family values (for example, not allowing their child to participate in other children's birthday parties because this was against the family's religious belief) (n = 11, 4.9%).

Quality characteristics related to management policies and practices were mentioned by only a small number of parents. A committee and staff that works well and harmoniously together (n = 11, 4.9%) was the main quality management characteristic mentioned.

Some quality characteristics which the research literature has shown to be key indicators of a good-quality centre were mentioned by small numbers of parents:

- a low turnover of staff (n = 10, 4.5%),
- trained staff (n = 11, 4.9%),
- a high ratio of staff to children (N = 19, 8.5%),
- peer group stability (n = 1),
- parent involvement (n = 19, 8.5%),
- good centre-parent communication (n = 11, 4.9%),
- a focus on promoting children's development (n = 23, 10.3%),
- a free-play programme (n = 22, 9.9%), and
- a physically safe environment (N = 42, 18.8%).

Staff described many features that characterised a good-quality centre for them, and particularly in the categories of programme, children's happiness and staffing (n = 65, an average of 2.03 comments; n = 54, an average of 1.69 comments; and n = 43, an average of 1.03 comments per staff member). The characteristics they referred to the most were:

- a focus on promoting children's development in the programme (n = 18, 56%),
- a happy, warm, friendly or homely atmosphere (n = 14, 43.7%),
- a physically safe environment (n = 11, 34.4%),

- parents are made to feel welcome or comfortable (n = 9, 28%), and
- children are made to feel secure and that they can trust the staff (n = 9, 28%).

A small number of staff descriptions contained mention of the importance of features of competent management (n = 3, 9.4%). Some staff descriptions also contained references to staffing characteristics as pertinent to centre quality:

- trained staff (n = 3, 9.4%),
- staff who enjoy their job (n = 3, 9.4%),
- staff professionalism (n = 4, 12.5%),
- experienced staff (n = 1, 3.2%),
- fit and healthy staff (n = 1, 3.2), and
- the continuing professional development of staff (n = 4, 12.5%).

Other structural quality indicators mentioned by some staff, were:

- a low staff turnover (n = 2, 6.3%),
- a high staff/child ratio (n = 7, 21.9%),
- parent involvement (n = 6, 18.8%), and
- good centre-parent communication (n = 7, 21.9%).

### *3.3.2 Views on the importance of various quality criteria*

Parents, staff, and experts were asked to rate the importance of various criteria of good-quality early education and care. The findings are presented in Table 6 and discussed below.

**TABLE 6**

***Parent, Staff and Expert Importance Ratings of Different Criteria of Centre Quality***

| *Criteria* | *Parents* | *Staff* | *Experts* | *Significance* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Children's Happiness** | Mean (S.D.) | Mean (S.D.) | Mean (S.D.) | p | Scheffe' |
| Staff show children they care about them | 3.88 (0.33) | 3.91 (0.30) | 3.92 (0.28) | .73 | No differences |
| Staff are responsive to children | 3.96 (0.23) | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.98 (0.15) | .44 | No differences |
| There is a sensitive settling-in process | 3.73 (0.57) | 3.94 (0.25) | 3.89 (0.32) | .02 | No differences |
| Stable peer group | 3.17 (0.81) | 3.81 (0.40) | 2.89 (0.67) | .00 | S > P, E |
| Staff home-visit families | 1.89 (0.96) | 2.30 (0.99) | 2.21 (0.88) | .02 | No differences |
| Parent contact encouraged | 3.52 (0.62) | 3.94 (0.25) | 3.87 (0.34) | .00 | S, E > P |
| Children's physical needs are met | 3.67 (0.56) | 3.87 (0.43) | 3.70 (0.59) | .17 | No differences |
| Excessive punishment is not used | 3.71 (0.70) | 3.68 (0.91) | 3.89 (0.49) | .27 | No differences |
| Home like pleasant atmosphere | 3.76 (0.47) | 3.97 (0.18) | 3.55 (0.69) | .00 | P, S > E |
| **Safety, Health and Hygiene** | | | | | |
| Clear pathways between activities | 3.30 (0.71) | 3.78 (0.42) | 3.23 (0.70) | .00 | S > P, E |
| Toys and equipment safe/maintained | 3.83 (0.42) | 3.97 (0.18) | 3.91 (0.28) | .07 | No differences |
| Children supervised at all times | 3.85 (0.37) | 3.97 (0.18) | 3.87 (0.40) | .22 | No differences |
| Clean building, facilities, toys | 3.80 (0.42) | 3.88 (0.34) | 3.57 (0.58) | .00 | P, S > E |
| Personal hygiene emphasised/taught | 3.75 (0.48) | 3.94 (0.25) | 3.36 (0.67) | .00 | P, S > E |
| Staff model good health/hygiene habits | 3.74 (0.52) | 3.90 (0.31) | 3.62 (0.57) | .07 | No differences |
| Provisions for children when sick | 3.31 (0.82) | 3.61 (0.76) | 3.62 (0.67) | .02 | No differences |
| Parents notified of any infection/disease | 3.54 (0.69) | 3.58 (0.72) | 3.74 (0.49) | .16 | No differences |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Programme** | | | | | |
| There is a written programme schedule | 2.55 (1.02) | 3.07 (1.03) | 3.07 (0.92) | .01 | S, E > P |
| Stimulating/interesting play activities | 3.77 (0.46) | 3.88 (0.42) | 3.67 (0.56) | .13 | No differences |
| Programme based on child/family needs | 3.12 (0.81) | 3.58 (0.72) | 3.85 (0.42) | .00 | S, E > P |
| Sufficient toys, equipment, materials | 3.68 (0.52) | 3.91 (0.30) | 3.77 (0.43) | .04 | No differences |
| Developmentally appropriate activities | 3.79 (0.41) | 3.97 (0.18) | 4.00 (0.00) | .00 | S, E > P |
| Balance child and staff initiated activities | 3.56 (0.59) | 3.74 (0.51) | 3.76 (0.48) | .03 | No differences |
| Balance of indoor/outdoor activities | 3.68 (0.53) | 3.75 (0.67) | 3.89 (0.31) | .03 | E > P |
| Individual, small & large group activities | 3.64 (0.53) | 3.91 (0.30) | 3.66 (0.64) | .03 | S > P |
| Provisions for special needs | 3.53 (0.78) | 3.79 (0.41) | 3.89 (0.31) | .00 | E > P |
| Cultural awareness promoted | 3.10 (0.84) | 3.75 (0.76) | 3.72 (0.45) | .00 | S. E > P |
| Biculturalism promoted | 2.77 (1.00) | 3.71 (0.64) | 3.92 (0.31) | .00 | S, E > P |
| Family values and customs supported | 3.14 (0.87) | 3.72 (0.46) | 3.59 (0.83) | .00 | S, E > P |
| Non-sexist (incl. behaviour & language) | 3.42 (0.81) | 3.75 (0.76) | 3.69 (0.51) | .01 | No differences |
| Staff join children in their play | 3.55 (0.71) | 3.53 (1.04) | 3.64 (0.56) | .72 | No differences |
| Regular outings and excursions | 3.16 (0.84) | 3.77 (0.56) | 3.11 (0.79) | .00 | S > P, E |
| Formative programme evaluations | 3.50 (0.65) | 3.75 (0.51) | 3.81 (0.49) | .00 | E > P |
| **Staffing** | | | | | |
| Qualified staff | 3.55 (0.72) | 3.53 (0.67) | 3.77 (0.47) | .12 | No differences |
| Staff have parenthood experience | 2.41 (1.07) | 2.38 (1.19) | 2.09 (1.11) | .20 | No differences |
| Staff experienced with children | 3.70 (0.56) | 3.72 (0.52) | 3.68 (0.52) | .96 | No differences |
| Staff are warm and caring people | 3.92 (0.29) | 3.97 (0.18) | 3.89 (0.13) | .51 | No differences |
| Staff work together as a team | 3.85 (0.36) | 3.94 (0.27) | 3.89 (0.31) | .31 | No differences |
| Staff meet to plan programme | 3.67 (0.52) | 3.83 (0.46) | 3.85 (0.42) | .04 | No differences |
| Good staff leadership | 3.73 (0.54) | 3.94 (0.25) | 3.77 (0.48) | .10 | No differences |
| Regularly undertake refresher training | 3.45 (0.75) | 3.53 (0.67) | 3.68 (0.47) | .12 | No differences |
| Stability in staffing | 3.34 (0.73) | 3.42 (0.77) | 3.43 (0.68) | .88 | No differences |
| Professionalism is considered important | 3.29 (0.89) | 3.55 (0.78) | 3.45 (0.93) | .23 | No differences |
| Provisions for staff in the environment | 3.51 (0.72) | 3.63 (0.94) | 3.49 (0.62) | .68 | No differences |
| Group size is not too big | 3.75 (0.48) | 3.94 (0.25) | 3.83 (0.38) | .08 | No differences |
| High ratio of staff to children | 3.42 (0.78) | 3.84 (0.37) | 3.94 (0.25) | .00 | S, E > P |
| **Parent, Family and Community Involvement** | | | | | |
| Parents and families made welcome | 3.73 (0.51) | 3.94 (0.25) | 3.98 (0.15) | .00 | E > P |
| Community involvement supported | 3.26 (0.76) | 3.47 (0.57) | 3.02 (0.68) | .02 | S > E |
| Outside professional assistance used | 3.39 (0.73) | 3.61 (0.62) | 3.34 (0.73) | .21 | No differences |
| Informed about philosophy & practices | 3.41 (0.70) | 3.77 (0.43) | 3.79 (0.42) | .00 | S, E > P |
| Parent education opportunities provided | 2.61 (0.98) | 3.58 (0.56) | 3.49 (0.69) | .00 | S, E > P |
| Parents regarded as joint partners | 3.42 (0.79) | 3.91 (0.30) | 3.87 (0.34) | .00 | S, E > P |
| Parents join in decision-making | 3.45 (0.72) | 3.72 (0.52) | 3.75 (0.44) | .00 | E > P |
| Friendship and support for parents | 3.41 (0.76) | 3.94 (0.25) | 3.62 (0.54) | .00 | S > P |
| Child progress/activity reports | 3.30 (0.80) | 3.44 (0.80) | 3.63 (0.53) | .03 | E > P |
| Provisions for parents in environment | 2.22 (1.02) | 3.32 (0.79) | 3.23 (0.66) | .00 | S, E > P |

* P = Parents, S = Staff, E = Experts

There was not much agreement amongst members of all three groups (staff, parents, experts) on the level of importance of four criteria as indicated by large standard deviations:

- staff are parents,
- a written programme schedule exists,
- staff carry out home-visiting, and
- staff professionalism.

In addition, parents' ratings differed widely on the importance of provisions for them and the promotion of biculturalism. Staff opinions on the level of importance of non-excessive punishment and whether they should join in on children's play varied considerably.

Some criteria of good-quality early education and care were obviously of greater importance than others to all three groups (parents, staff, and experts). According to parents, staff and experts it seems to be most important that:

- staff are responsive to children (e.g. to their social bids, to their feelings),
- activities are developmentally appropriate,
- toys and equipment are safe and kept well maintained,
- staff show children they care about them,
- children are supervised at all times,
- staff work together as a team,
- staff are warm and caring people,
- parents and families are made to feel welcome, and
- group size (children attending) is not too big.

Each of the nine criteria have a combined group mean importance score of 3.70 and above.

It is also apparent by looking at the mean importance rating scores for each group that two criteria were considered to be of only modest importance:

- staff are parents themselves, and
- staff visit families and children at home.

In addition, staff and experts, but not parents, rated a written programme schedule as being of moderate importance.

To see if there were any systematic differences in mean importance rating scores between the groups analysis of variance was carried out. On the 34 criteria with a F value significant at the 0.05 level, the Scheffe' procedure was used to identify pairwise differences. A large number of pairwise differences were found and these are shown in the "Significance" column of Table 6.

Most pairwise differences were between parents and staff-experts. The following criteria, related to ensuring home-centre continuity for children and promoting links with parents and families, were rated significantly lower in importance by parents compared to both parents and experts:

- carrying out home-visiting,
- basing the programme around child and family needs/interests,
- supporting family values/customs in the programme,
- informing parents about programme philosophy and practices,
- providing parent education,
- working in partnership with parents, and
- providing for parent's needs in the centre environment.

In addition, parents' mean rating scores were significantly lower than experts' on the criteria of:

- making parents and families feel welcome,
- involving parents in decision-making, and
- providing parents with information about their children's activities and progress.

Parents' mean rating of the extent to which being provided with support and friendship is an important criteria of good-quality centre was significantly lower than the staff mean rating.

In contrast to staff and experts, parents tendency to award a lower importance rating to quality criteria related to ensuring home-centre continuity and promoting links with families seems to be linked with the also lower level of importance they attached to such goals (see Section 3.2.1). This suggests that parents viewed the early childhood centre as a place that is more for their children than for themselves. Staff and experts, on the other hand, gave more importance to parents being part of the early childhood centre and closer ties between the centre and children's home.

Parents' mean rating scores were also significantly lower than staff and experts' mean rating scores on the level of importance of:

- a written programme schedule,
- a developmentally appropriate programme,
- a high ratio of staff to children,
- promotion of biculturalism,
- promotion of cultural awareness

The statistically significant differences between parents' and staff-expert mean ratings of the importance of the first three criteria could be related to staff and experts' professional training and knowledge base. Higher ratings by staff and experts on the importance of biculturalism and cultural awareness may be related to the emphasis on this in the proposed charter requirements at the time of the survey.

Statistically significant differences between staff and both experts and parents mean importance ratings on the following criteria, indicate that these were of greatest concern to staff:

- a pleasant atmosphere,
- a clean environment,
- children learning good personal hygiene,
- community involvement,
- a stable group of children,
- clear pathways between areas, and
- regular outings and excursions.

Some of these criteria, namely a pleasant atmosphere, a clean environment, and children are taught good personal hygiene, were more important to parents than to experts.

Looking at the actual size of the group's mean importance scores it is apparent that the groups differed widely in their opinion on the level of importance of particular criteria.

A low turnover of children received a much higher rating of importance by staff compared to both parents and experts. This criterion may have been rated higher in importance by staff because stability in child attendance effects the atmosphere of a centre. Whereas, experts and parents may not have accorded this as much importance as staff because they are not so intimately involved in the everyday life of their centre. Centre atmosphere received a much higher rating of importance by staff compared to experts.

Clear pathways between activity area received a much higher rating of importance by staff than both parents and experts. Given that it is staff who are more likely to trip over objects and experience back-strain greater emphasis on the importance of this criterion by staff is to be expected.

Including regular outings and excursions in the programme was rated as more important by staff and not quite as important by parents and experts.

The notable differences between the three groups mean importance ratings on the criterion of teaching children personal hygiene is puzzling. Most experts did not think this to be as important as parents did. Experts also rated this criterion quite a bit lower in importance than staff did. Perhaps experts viewed this as less of a responsibility of the early childhood centre and more of a responsibility of parents?

Staff rated home-visiting to be more important than parents considered it to be. This indicates that while staff viewed the practice as having some benefits and they may have been willing to do it, parents viewed it as having few or not benefits for themselves and probably did not want to be home-visited. Staff and experts' ratings of the importance of staff working in partnership with parents and of provisions for parents in the centre environment, were much higher than parents' ratings. Staff tended to give higher ratings than parents to the importance of staff providing parents with support. Staff and experts rated the provision of parent education as much more important than did parents.

Nearly all experts rated the criterion of the programme reflecting child and family needs as very important, whereas, parents rated it much lower in importance. This suggests that parents had more preference for staff determining programme content whereas experts considered that staff must take family backgrounds into account when planning programmes. The large difference between staff and parent mean ratings on the criterion of staff demonstrating support of family values and customs further strengthens the suggestion that the family support function of the early childhood centre is not so important from the parents' point of view.

The promotion of cultural awareness received a much higher mean rating of importance by staff and experts compared to parents.

Although a high ratio of staff to children was rated as important by all three groups, differences in the size of the mean rating scores indicate that experts viewed it as a much more important criterion of good-quality than did parents.

### *3.3.3 The importance of various quality criteria across centres*

Table 7 shows a breakdown of parents' mean importance scores by centre type and indicates the criteria on which statistically significant differences in mean ratings between parents at two or more types of centres were found.

**TABLE 7**

*Parents' Mean Ratings of the Importance of Various Quality Criteria at Different Centres and Statistically Significant Differences Among Groups*

| Quality Criteria | Kindergarten | Childcare | Playcentre | Kohanga | Significance | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Children's Happiness** | Mean (S.D.) | Mean (S.D.) | Mean (S.D.) | Mean (S.D.) | p | Scheffe * |
| Staff show children they care | 3.83 (0.38) | 3.95 (0.23) | 3.92 (0.27) | 4.00 (0.00) | .06 | None |
| Staff are responsive to children | 3.95 (0.26) | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.89 (0.33) | 4.00 (0.00) | .15 | None |
| Settling-in process | 3.65 (0.62) | 3.87 (0.47) | 3.73 (0.53) | 3.92 (0.29) | .06 | None |
| Peer group stability | 3.06 (0.84) | 3.46 (0.69) | 3.12 (0.77) | 3.17 (0.84) | .02 | C > K |
| Home-visiting | 2.22 (1.00) | 1.30 (0.51) | 1.28 (0.65) | 1.73 (0.91) | .00 | K > C, P |
| Parent contact is encouraged | 3.49 (0.63) | 3.47 (0.67) | 3.68 (0.48) | 3.80 (0.42) | .21 | None |
| Physical needs are met | 3.59 (0.61) | 3.82 (0.26) | 3.46 (0.65) | 3.92 (0.29) | .00 | C > P, K |
| Non-excessive punishment | 3.72 (0.64) | 3.82 (0.55) | 3.68 (0.80) | 3.17 (1.34) | .04 | C > T |
| Pleasant atmosphere | 3.77 (0.44) | 3.87 (0.39) | 3.69 (0.47) | 3.33 (0.78) | .00 | C, K > T |
| **Safety, Health and Hygiene** | | | | | | |
| Division of space | 3.36 (0.68) | 3.34 (0.72) | 3.15 (0.73) | 3.25 (0.87) | .49 | None |
| Safety of environment | 3.84 (0.39) | 3.82 (0.43) | 3.85 (0.37) | 3.67 (0.65) | .58 | None |
| Supervision | 3.84 (0.39) | 3.91 (0.29) | 3.85 (0.37) | 3.67 (0.49) | .22 | None |
| Clean environment | 3.79 (0.43) | 3.86 (0.36) | 3.73 (0.53) | 3.92 (0.29) | .44 | None |
| Children's hygiene emphasised | 3.74 (0.51) | 3.76 (0.43) | 3.70 (0.53) | 3.92 (0.29) | .61 | None |
| Model good health/hygiene | 3.76 (0.50) | 3.71 (0.50) | 3.69 (0.62) | 3.75 (0.62) | .91 | None |
| Sick child provisions | 3.25 (0.82) | 3.45 (0.67) | 3.04 (1.04) | 3.83 (0.58) | .02 | None |
| Notify about infections | 3.57 (0.66) | 3.56 (0.70) | 3.40 (0.71) | 3.50 (0.91) | .75 | None |
| **Programme** | | | | | | |
| Written programme schedule | 2.64 (1.06) | 2.56 (0.92) | 2.00 (0.91) | 2.75 (1.06) | .03 | T > P |
| Stimulating interesting activities | 3.78 (0.44) | 3.76 (0.47) | 3.65 (0.56) | 3.92 (0.29) | .40 | None |
| Based on child and family needs | 3.02 (0.87) | 3.21 (0.77) | 3.33 (0.56) | 3.40 (0.70) | .14 | None |
| Sufficient equipment, etc | 3.71 (0.49) | 3.73 (0.45) | 3.60 (0.50) | 3.33 (1.00) | .08 | None |
| Developmentally appropriate | 3.79 (0.41) | 3.80 (0.40) | 3.73 (0.45) | 3.92 (0.29) | .63 | None |
| Balance of child/staff activities | 3.55 (0.59) | 3.63 (0.56) | 3.42 (0.64) | 3.58 (0.67) | .53 | None |
| Balance of indoor/outdoor activities | 3.72 (0.50) | 3.70 (0.46) | 3.42 (0.70) | 3.58 (0.67) | .06 | None |
| Activities for different sized groups | 3.63 (0.54) | 3.66 (0.48) | 3.50 (0.59) | 3.83 (0.39) | .34 | None |
| Provisions for special needs children | 3.51 (0.89) | 3.50 (0.65) | 3.61 (0.50) | 3.64 (0.51) | .90 | None |
| Cultural awareness promoted | 3.06 (0.84) | 3.07 (0.82) | 3.13 (0.85) | 3.67 (0.65) | .11 | None |
| Biculturalism promoted | 2.69 (0.98) | 2.79 (1.00) | 2.72 (1.02) | 3.75 (0.62) | .01 | T > K,C,P |
| Family customs and values supported | 3.02 (0.92) | 3.35 (0.68) | 2.96 (0.96) | 3.83 (0.39) | .00 | T > K, P |
| Non-sexist | 3.33 (0.88) | 3.54 (0.69) | 3.36 (0.81) | 3.91 (0.30) | .07 | None |
| Staff join children in their play | 3.43 (0.78) | 3.71 (0.63) | 3.65 (0.49) | 3.75 (0.45) | .05 | None |
| Outings and excursions | 3.03 (0.89) | 3.43 (0.72) | 3.04 (0.72) | 3.59 (0.67) | .01 | C > K |
| Programme evaluation | 3.56 (0.62) | 3.45 (0.61) | 3.36 (0.76) | 3.28 (0.79) | .27 | None |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Staffing** | | | | | | |
| Qualified staff | 3.67 (0.64) | 3.47 (0.66) | 3.40 (0.71) | 2.83 (1.27) | .00 | C, K > T |
| Staff are parents themselves | 2.34 (1.06) | 2.32 (1.03) | 2.66 (1.09) | 3.00 (1.21) | .11 | None |
| Staff experienced with young children | 3.74 (0.52) | 3.69 (0.51) | 3.48 (0.82) | 3.67 (0.49) | .20 | None |
| Staff are warm and caring people | 3.92 (0.28) | 3.96 (0.19) | 3.85 (0.46) | 3.92 (0.29) | .40 | None |
| Work well together as a team | 3.87 (0.34) | 3.82 (0.39) | 3.81 (0.41) | 3.83 (0.39) | .74 | None |
| Staff meetings for programme planning | 3.73 (0.46) | 3.63 (0.56) | 3.46 (0.67) | Did not ask | .05 | None |
| Good staff leadership | 3.76 (0.47) | 3.76 (0.47) | 3.77 (0.65) | 3.09 (0.94) | .00 | K, C, P >T |
| Regularly undertake refresher courses | 3.49 (0.73) | 3.35 (0.79) | 3.40 (0.87) | 3.56 (0.69) | .67 | None |
| Stability in staffing | 3.38 (0.69) | 3.49 (0.67) | 3.16 (0.99) | 3.20 (0.63) | .25 | None |
| Professionalism considered important | 3.48 (0.74) | 3.17 (1.00) | 2.92 (0.95) | 2.67 (1.23) | .00 | K > T, P |
| Provisions for staff in the environment | 3.61 (0.59) | 3.72 (0.50) | 2.68 (0.95) | 3.25 (1.06) | .00 | K, C > P |
| Group size | 3.79 (0.41) | 3.85 (0.36) | 3.56 (0.58) | 3.25 (0.97) | .00 | K, C > T |
| Ratio of staff to children | 3.36 (0.82) | 3.61 (0.56) | 3.19 (0.98) | 3.73 (0.47) | .05 | None |
| **Parent, Family and Community Involvement** | | | | | | |
| Parents and families welcomed | 3.68 (0.56) | 3.86 (0.36) | 3.79 (0.42) | 3.58 (0.67) | .12 | None |
| Community involvement encouraged | 3.35 (0.75) | 3.00 (0.80) | 3.32 (0.69) | 3.36 (0.67) | .05 | None |
| Professional assistance used | 3.42 (0.73) | 3.31 (0.71) | 3.27 (0.83) | 3.64 (0.51) | .44 | None |
| Parents informed about goals/practices | 3.41 (0.70) | 3.37 (0.76) | 3.46 (0.58) | 3.55 (0.69) | .87 | None |
| Parent education opportunities | 2.54 (0.79) | 2.59 (0.94) | 2.88 (1.12) | 3.00 (0.89) | .24 | None |
| Regard parents as joint partners | 3.38 (0.85) | 3.40 (0.80) | 3.75 (0.44) | 3.55 (0.52) | .15 | None |
| Parents participate in decision-making | 3.43 (0.70) | 3.30 (0.79) | 3.65 (0.69) | 3.91 (0.30) | .03 | None |
| Parent friendship and support | 3.28 (0.81) | 3.63 (0.60) | 3.64 (0.57) | 3.25 (0.87) | .01 | None |
| Report on child progress/activities | 3.26 (0.82) | 3.44 (0.69) | 3.31 (0.79) | 3.08 (1.00) | .39 | None |
| Provisions for parents in the centre | 2.09 (0.99) | 2.35 (1.07) | 2.23 (0.99) | 2.92 (1.00) | .03 | None |

* K = Kindergarten, C = Childcare, P = Playcentre, T = Te Kohanga Reo

Home-visiting was rated moderately low in importance by all groups, but kindergarten parents' mean rating score was found to be significantly higher than childcare and playcentre parents.

On criteria related to staffing there were some statistically significant differences in ratings among parents' at the different centres. Staff professionalism received a significantly higher mean rating of importance by parents at kindergarten than at playcentre and Kohanga Reo. Qualified staff was rated as a significantly more important criterion of a good-quality centre by parents at kindergarten and childcare centres than at Kohanga Reo. A large difference in the actual size of kindergarten, childcare and kohanga parents' mean ratings of the importance of staff parenthood experience suggests that this was viewed as more important by kohanga parents. This difference, however, was not found to be statistically significant because of the large standard deviations in the groups' mean rating scores.

Kohanga parents' mean ratings were significantly higher than playcentre and kindergarten parents on the importance of the promotion of biculturalism and recognition of family values and customs in the programme. Their mean rating of the importance of biculturalism was also significantly higher than childcare parents' mean rating.

The number of children (i.e. group-size) received a significantly higher mean rating of importance by kindergarten and childcare parents compared to kohanga parents. Good staff leadership received a significantly lower mean rating of importance by kohanga parents compared to parents at each of the three other types of centres.

Two criteria, outings and excursions and peer-group stability, received significantly higher ratings of importance by childcare parents than kindergarten parents. Childcare parents rated the criterion of meeting children's physical needs significantly higher in importance than playcentre and kindergarten parents did Given the longer hours of childcare centre operation, it seems logical that childcare parents did place greater importance on children being taken on trips in the wider community, establishing a stable group of friends, and having all their physical needs met.

Although not found to be statistically significant there are some other noteworthy differences in the magnitude of parents' mean importance scores across the centres.

Encouraging parent contact with the centre was given a much higher rating of importance by kohanga parents than kindergarten and childcare parents.

Large differences between kohanga and playcentre and kindergarten parents' ratings on the importance of two criteria, provisions for sick children and a good adult-child ratio, are interesting. There could be factors, such as greater parent employment amongst kohanga parents (see Section 3.1.3), which are linked to their higher rating of the importance of provisions for sick children and the need to have a high ratio of staff to children.

The criterion of safe equipment, toys, and environment was rated quite a bit higher in importance by kindergarten and childcare parents than by kohanga parents.

A written programme schedule was rated by playcentre parents as being moderately important, however parents at the other centres rated this as more important. The higher magnitude of kohanga parents' mean rating suggests that they viewed this as more important than the other groups did.

Kohanga parents viewed the criteria of a programme based on an understanding of child and family needs and non-sexist programme practices as more important than kindergarten parents did. Other criteria rated higher in importance by Kohanga parents than other groups were promotion of cultural awareness, and provisions for parents in the environment.

Parent participation in decision making was rated much higher in importance by parents at Kohanga Reo than at childcare centres. Kohanga parents' mean ratings of the importance of provisions for parent education and staff parenthood experience are quite a bit higher than kindergarten and childcare parents' mean ratings.

**TABLE 8**

***Staff Mean Ratings of the Importance of Various Quality Criteria at Different Centres and Statistically Significant Differences Among Groups***

| **Quality Criteria** | **Kindergarten** | **Childcare** | **Playcentre** | **Kohanga** | **Significance** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Children's Happiness** | Mean (S.D.) | Mean (S.D.) | Mean (S.D.) | Mean (S.D.) | p | Scheffe * |
| Staff demonstrate they care | 3.75 (0.46) | 3.94 (0.24) | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | .39 | None |
| Responsive staff | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | - | None |
| Settling-in process | 3.75 (0.46) | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | .10 | None |
| Peer group stability | 3.75 (0.46) | 3.83 (0.38) | 3.75 (0.50) | 4.00 (0.00) | .86 | None |
| Home-visiting | 3.13 (0.84) | 1.88 (0.78) | 2.00 (0.82) | 4.00 (0.00) | .00 | K > C |
| Parent contact | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.89 (0.32) | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | .68 | None |
| Physical needs are met | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.94 (0.24) | 3.25 (0.96) | 4.00 (0.00) | .01 | K, C > P |
| Non-excessive punishment | 3.63 (1.06) | 3.67 (0.97) | 3.75 (0.50) | 4.00 (0.00) | .98 | None |
| Pleasant atmosphere | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.75 (0.50) | 4.00 (0.00) | .06 | None |
| **Safety, Health and Hygiene** | | | | | | |
| Division of space | 3.86 (0.35) | 3.83 (0.38) | 3.50 (0.58) | 3.50 (0.71) | .35 | None |
| Safety of environment | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.75 (0.50) | 4.00 (0.00) | .07 | None |
| Supervision | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.75 (0.50) | 4.00 (0.00) | .06 | None |
| Clean environment | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.89 (0.32) | 3.50 (0.58) | 4.00 (0.00) | .09 | None |
| Children's hygiene habits | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.50 (0.58) | 4.00 (0.00) | .00 | K ,C, T > P |
| Model good health/hygiene | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.94 (0.24) | 3.50 (0.58) | 4.00 (0.00) | .04 | None |
| Sick child provisions | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.83 (0.38) | 2.67 (1.16) | 2.50 (2.12) | .01 | None |
| Notify infections/diseases | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.72 (0.58) | 2.67 (1.16) | 4.00 (0.00) | .09 | None |
| **Programme** | | | | | | |
| Written schedule | 3.57 (0.79) | 3.17 (0.89) | 1.75 (1.50) | 0.00 (0.00) | .01 | K, C > P |
| Stimulating activities | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.83 (0.51) | 3.75 (0.50) | 4.00 (0.00) | .72 | None |
| Based on child/family needs | 3.88 (0.35) | 3.56 (0.78) | 3.00 (0.82) | 4.00 (0.00) | .24 | None |
| Sufficient equipment, etc | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.89 (0.32) | 3.75 (0.50) | 4.00 (0.00) | .56 | None |
| Developmentally appropriate | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.75 (0.50) | 4.00 (0.00) | .06 | None |
| Balance child/staff activities | 3.63 (0.52) | 3.94 (0.24) | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | .00 | P > K |
| Indoor/outdoor activities | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.89 (0.32) | 2.50 (1.29) | 4.00 (0.00) | .00 | C ,K ,T > P |
| Different group sized activities | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.94 (0.24) | 3.50 (0.58) | 4.00 (0.00) | .02 | C, K > P |
| Provisions for special needs | 3.57 (0.54) | 3.94 (0.24) | 3.50 (0.58) | 4.00 (0.00) | .08 | None |
| Cultural awareness | 3.88 (0.35) | 3.78 (0.73) | 3.25 (1.50) | 4.00 (0.00) | .56 | None |
| Biculturalism promoted | 3.75 (0.46) | 3.82 (0.39) | 3.00 (1.41) | 4.00 (0.00) | .11 | None |
| Family values supported | 3.63 (0.52) | 3.78 (0.43) | 3.50 (0.58) | 4.00 (0.00) | .53 | None |
| Non-sexist | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.72 (0.75) | 3.25 (1.50) | 4.00 (0.00) | .44 | None |
| Staff join children in play | 2.25 (1.39) | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | .00 | C, P, T > K |
| Outings and excursions | 3.88 (0.35) | 3.78 (0.43) | 3.25 (0.96) | 4.00 (0.00) | .18 | None |
| Programme evaluation | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.89 (0.32) | 2.75 (0.96) | 4.00 (0.00) | .00 | K , C ,T > P |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Staffing** | | | | | | |
| Qualified staff | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.44 (0.62) | 3.25 (0.96) | 3.00 (1.41) | .10 | None |
| Staff are parents | 2.00 (1.31) | 2.33 (1.09) | 2.50 (1.29) | 4.00 (0.00) | .20 | None |
| Staff experienced | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.61 (0.61) | 3.50 (0.58) | 4.00 (0.00) | .23 | None |
| Warm and caring people | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.75 (0.50) | 4.00 (0.00) | .06 | None |
| Team-work | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.50 (0.58) | 4.00 (0.00) | .00 | K, C ,T > P |
| Meetings for programme planning | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.94 (0.24) | 3.00 (0.82) | Did not ask | .00 | K, C > P |
| Good staff leadership | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.50 (0.58) | 4.00 (0.00) | .00 | K, C > P |
| Refresher training | 3.86 (0.35) | 3.50 (0.51) | 3.50 (0.58) | 2.50 (2.12) | .07 | None |
| Stability in staffing | 2.86 (1.07) | 3.67 (0.49) | 3.00 (0.82) | 4.00 (0.00) | .04 | None |
| Professionalism important | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.63 (0.50) | 2.67 (1.16) | 4.00 (0.00) | .01 | None |
| Provisions for staff | 3.50 (1.07) | 4.00 (0.00) | 2.00 (1.41) | 4.00 (0.00) | .00 | K, C, T > P |
| Group size | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.89 (0.32) | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | .70 | None |
| Ratio staff to children | 3.88 (0.35) | 3.83 (0.38) | 3.75 (0.50) | 4.00 (0.00) | .89 | None |
| **Parent, Family and Community Involvement** | | | | | | |
| Parents/families welcomed | 3.88 (0.35) | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.75 (0.50) | 4.00 (0.00) | .25 | None |
| Community involvement | 3.50 (0.54) | 3.50 (0.51) | 3.00 (0.82) | 4.00 (0.00) | .21 | None |
| Professional assistance used | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.56 (0.62) | 3.00 (0.82) | 4.00 (0.00) | .04 | None |
| Informed of goals/practices | 3.72 (0.49) | 3.83 (0.38) | 3.50 (0.58) | 4.00 (0.00) | .52 | None |
| Parent education | 3.57 (0.54) | 3.61 (0.50) | 3.25 (0.96) | 4.00 (0.00) | .49 | None |
| Parent-staff partnership | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.89 (0.32) | 3.75 (0.50) | 4.00 (0.00) | .56 | None |
| Participate in decision-making | 3.63 (0.52) | 3.67 (0.59) | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | .56 | None |
| Parent support/friendship | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.94 (0.24) | 3.75 (0.50) | 4.00 (0.00) | .41 | None |
| Reports about children | 3.25 (1.04) | 3.50 (0.71) | 3.25 (0.96) | 4.00 (0.00) | .65 | None |
| Provisions for parents | 3.13 (0.99) | 3.44 (0.71) | 3.00 (0.82) | 4.00 (0.00) | .53 | None |

* K = Kindergarten, C = Childcare, P = Playcentre, T = Te Kohanga Reo

In Table 7 a statistically significant difference between kindergarten and childcare parents mean importance rating of the practice of home-visiting was reported, likewise, Table 8 shows that staff at kindergartens and childcare centres also significantly differed in their ratings of this.

Meeting children's physical needs was rated very high in importance by both kindergarten and childcare staff, but a statistically significant difference was found only between kindergarten and playcentre staff ratings as playcentre staff did not rate this criterion as quite so important.

Teaching children good personal hygiene was rated a "4" by all staff except for some playcentre staff who rated this as slightly less important. The difference between the mean rating of playcentre staff and the mean ratings of the other groups was found to be statistically significant.

Playcentre staff rating of the criterion of a written programme schedule was significantly lower than kindergarten and childcare staff mean ratings.

A balance of some indoor and some outdoor activities was rated significantly lower in importance by playcentre staff than all other groups. The magnitude of the mean ratings suggests that kindergarten, childcare, and kohanga staff viewed this criterion as much more important than playcentre staff did.

The organization of activities to encourage children and staff to form different sized groups was rated significantly higher in importance by childcare and kindergarten staff than playcentre staff.

Kindergarten staff tended to give a lower rating of importance to joining in on children's play than staff at the other centres, and this difference was a statistically significant one.

On five criteria related to staff practices, experiences and relationships, playcentre staff mean importance ratings were significantly lower than two or all three of the other groups:

- evaluation of the programme,
- meetings for programme planning,
- team-work,
- good leadership, and

- provisions for them in the centre environment.

Statistically significant differences were not found between two or more groups of staff on the following criteria, but the differences in the actual size of the mean rating scores of the groups on these is large:

- programme based on an understanding of child and family needs,
- promotion of cultural awareness in the programme,
- promotion of biculturalism,
- non-sexist practices,
- stability in staffing,
- staff professionalism, and
- the services of outside professionals are used.

On all of these criteria the difference was largest between playcentre staff and one or more of the other groups, in the direction of playcentre parents awarding lower ratings of importance.

## 3.4 The Special Qualities of Different Centres

This section reports the consensus opinions of representatives from the kindergartens, childcare centres, and playcentres on what defines and constitutes the quality of their centres. Direct quotations are provided to illustrate the different quality characteristics which they identified during their discussions.

### 3.4.1 Kindergarten

Kindergarten representatives developed their definition of quality from their movement's philosophy. A head teacher explained to others in her group:

> *"If you are going to provide quality your philosophy is going to effect quality. To me philosophy and one's perspective on quality is very much the same".*

The group developed this short definition of what constitutes a good-quality kindergarten:

> *"... provides a free choice of activities which are planned by trained staff allowing the individual child to progress at his/her own rate".*

They identified and discussed the characteristics of quality that defined their service. In short, a kindergarten was thought to be more of a pre-school than other types of centres because an optimal learning environment was fostered through separation of age-groups, staff professionalism, and the nature of staff training.

In most kindergarten settings younger and older children were divided into two groups with the younger children attending afternoon session and the older children attending morning session. Staff strongly valued their professionalism and training through full-time pre-service study at a College of Education. The voluntary component of parent involvement was discussed to be under threat due to the introduction of minimum staff-child ratios and the failure of the government to provide the number of trained staff needed to meet minimum and higher quality charter standards of staffing.

#### *Age-Segregated Pre-school Sessions*

> *"Age range is confined to 3 - 4 year olds and 4 - 5 year olds rather than a mixed age range";*
>
> *"You can work more effectively with children in the same age-group than you can with children of widely different ages";*
>
> *"The children can relate to each other if they are of the same age".*

#### *Professional, Trained Staff*

> *"Quality must mean trained teachers. Training guarantees a certain uniformity in the quality of staff";*
>
> *"Our (kindergarten) training makes us quite different from a lot of other early childhood services";*
>
> *"There is 40 kids in most kindergartens which means we have to have a parent-help to meet ratio requirements. It's just making a sham of our professionalism".*

#### *Reliance on Parent-helpers*

> *"In kindergarten's there is no rostering of parent-helpers. Parents are invited and encouraged but it is their right not to come through the gate if they choose not to";*
>
> *"The Dunedin Kindergarten Association has said that we should put in our charter that a parent-help will always be available until we get improvements in staffing";*
>
> *"The Ministry are going to hold us to it. At the moment its an amicable agreement with parents".*

#### *Donation Based*

> *"I use kindergarten as well as a childcare centre. I'm quite happy to go along and help out at kindergarten because it only costs me $2 (donation) a week";*

> *"We sent out a letter asking parents whether they would like to be part of the parent-help ... we also gave them a user-pays option where we could go for a teacher aide for two or three days a week and still have some parent-helps. So far the results have been about two-thirds want that (the first) option".*

### 3.4.2 Childcare

The definition of a quality childcare centre that childcare representatives developed was:

> *"The very best conditions and environment (as interpreted through trained staff, low ratios, proper material, equipment, good food, child initiated environment) for the education and care of young children (0 - 5 years)".*

Some of the characteristics of quality they identified were associated with the longer hours of childcare centres, while others were associated with the historical background of the childcare service.

In summary, members of the group agreed that childcare programmes shared no single philosophy and had a variety of different styles of operation. Childcare centres were more flexible than other centres in meeting the needs and different requirements of families for child care. Parents were charged fees and, therefore, at most childcare centres parent assistance or involvements was no required. Staff received pre- and inservice training under a diversity of training schemes. This was viewed as a major strength of the childcare work-force because people with different training backgrounds, skills, and perspectives worked together. Staff usually formed close relationships with children and got to know their parents and families very well, often over a number of years, and this was seen to foster the family-like atmosphere that characterises a quality childcare centre.

#### *Diversity in Philosophies*

> *"We operate according to various philosophies. In a consumer environment this is important".*

#### *Flexibility*

> *"We have low ratios (children to staff), children can be enrolled from birth ... we're open full-day and for more weeks in the year compared to kindergarten and playcentre".*

#### *Fees Charged*

> *"Childcare caters for people who work, who want quality ratios and charge fees accordingly to parents who expect that care".*

#### *Diversity in Staff Training*

> *"A variety of training is one of our strengths, and field based training".*

#### *Family-Type Atmosphere*

> *"The adult-child ratios allow us to spontaneously take children for a walk";*
>
> *"If there is a range of ages and people on the staff it's good for children because they can find someone who they feel they can respond to";*
>
> *"It's definitely that closeness that you get with children".*

#### *Friendships with Parents and Family Support*

> *"Building relationships and partnerships with parents is important";*
>
> *"The more staff in your centre the more of a chance parents have of naturally clicking with one staff member.*

### 3.4.3 Playcentre

Playcentre representatives formulated their definition of quality from the goals of their service (which they had just been discussing):

> *"Quality is a collection of adjectives".*

> *"Let's just grab all these goals and push them into one sentence".*

Note that this provides some confirmation of an assumption made in this research project, that goals shape and are intimately linked with definitions of quality and perspectives on early childhood centre quality.

The definition of a quality playcentre they came up with was a:

> *"Happy, co-operative, stimulating, child-centred, culturally aware environment for nought to six years, providing group and individual experiences for all children and adults".*

Playcentre quality was believed to be characterised by: interested and involved parents, organization of playcentres as parent-cooperatives, group supervision practices, provisions for parent education at various levels, and a strong commitment to operating on a voluntary basis although government assistance through funding was viewed to be important by most members of the group.

#### *Involved Parents*

> *"Parents form the character of a playcentre. When you think about the friends you've met through playcentre and the experiences that you go through - I don't know how you can put that in the charter (in writing)";*

> *"It's the amount of effort that you put into it. What you put in is what you get back";*

> *"New parents often don't know what's involved in running a playcentre. So unless you keep mentioning that someone has topped up the sand-pit they don't know that the work is happening and therefore don't get involved and you get annoyed".*

#### *Supportive Parents - Parent Co-operative*

> *"The main function of the co-operative is to involve everyone. How you function as a co-operative is important to the centre";*

> *"At our meeting the other night we talked about whether our supervisor should do three sessions a week. I was amazed how the parents were all really aware of the possibility of being over stressed and what they could do about it";*

> *"Should we say that supportiveness adds to the quality of our centres? We've got a good parent body and the playcentre association is really supportive. We're used to Association people coming in and saying positive things".*

#### *Group Supervision*

> *"Things like group supervision which is the whole core of playcentre and an extension of being a parent cooperative in the North Island is important to hold on to".*

#### *Parent Education: Training and Personal Development*

> *"Providing for all children and adults ... this is a main difference between playcentre and kindergarten. We want our supervisors (including parents) to grow";*

> *"When I think about the things that I learned through playcentre and how groups work ... At leadership courses you'd learn to understand a bit more about yourself, so that when you do want changes, or when you've got conflict, you can handle it better. You also learn more about the way other people work, and the way to manipulate things (general laughter) so that they work to your benefit".*

#### *Voluntary Basis and Funding*

> *"Poorly funded centres can be good too" ... "as long as there are warm and caring adults;"*

> *"It (funding) does relieve a lot of pressure not to have to raise funds constantly;"*

*"It (Government's new minimum standards requirements) seems a lot to ask a struggling centre to provide something they haven't needed for five years. We are used to having no money. So that when money does come along we don't want to spend it on toilets. We want to get some hardback books and stuff";*

*"When I first looked at the Purple Book (Early Childhood Management Handbook) I thought I'd wait and see about the level of funding. Part of me said to skip the strings and go your own way. But the funding is too attractive".*

## 3.5. Parent and Staff Perceptions of their Centres

### 3.5.1 Praises for their centre

Parents and staff all praised a particular feature or features of their centre, or their child's or their own experiences of it.

Parents had most praise for features related to the programme (n = 170, 76.2%), children's happiness and well-being (n = 156,70%), and staffing (n = 141, 63.2%). From their observations and experiences ten or more parents made the following positive comments:

- good - marvellous staff (n = 79, 35.4%)
- warm, relaxed, happy atmosphere (n = 45, 20.2%),
- large number of toys and equipment (n = 44, 19.7%),
- spacious rooms/areas (n = 30, 13.5%),
- good programme (n = 29, 13%),
- responsive staff who meet children's needs (n = 24, 10.4%),
- children enjoy themselves - love the centre (n = 21, 9.4%),
- staff have a caring attitude (n = 19, 8.5%),
- staff relate well with the children (n = 17, 7.6%),
- stimulating or interesting activities (n = 16, 7.2%),
- parents are always made to feel welcome (n = 16, 7.2%),
- hard-working or good committee or management (n = 14, 6.3%),
- staff are approachable to parents (n = 13, 5.8%),
- hard-working staff (n = 10, 4.5%),
- activities are suited to children's abilities/ages (n = 10, 4.5%), and
- parent involvement is encouraged(n = 10, 4.5%).

The staff made many references to features related to the quality of their work environment (an average of 1.2 features (n = 37) per staff member). Other features related to the physical environment or to the programme received praise from fewer than 50 percent of the staff. Two or more staff made the following positive comments:

- good or harmonious staff relationships (n = 12, 37.5%), kindergarten, childcare, playcentre staff),
- work well together as a staffing team (n = 12, 37.5% kindergarten, childcare, playcentre staff),
- warm, relaxed, happy atmosphere (n = 10, 31.3% kindergarten, childcare, playcentre staff),
- opportunity to form close attachments with children (n = 8, 25% kindergarten, childcare, kohanga staff),
- motivated and supportive management or committee (n = 8, 25% kindergarten, childcare, playcentre staff),
- good physical environment for children and adults (n = 7, 21.9% kindergarten and childcare staff),
- provisions to cater for children's individual learning needs (n = 4, 12.5% kindergarten, childcare, playcentre staff),
- effective leadership by head staff member (n = 4, 12.5% childcare staff),
- good relationships with parents (n = 4, 12.5% kindergarten and childcare staff).
- well-equipped with all facilities (n = 3, 9.4% childcare staff),
- many rooms to use for different purposes (n = 2, 6.3% childcare staff), and
- other staff at centre also committed to improving quality levels (n = 2, 6.3% childcare staff),

Two positive comments appear to be linked to particular centres. Harmonious relationships amongst staff was particularly important to kindergarten teachers as seven out of eight teachers mentioned it. Staff at only one childcare centre praised the leadership of their director, and staff at other centres did not.

### 3.5.2 Dissatisfactions with their centre

Less than half the parents did not express dissatisfactions or mention problems (n = 96, 43%). They either did not respond to the question of what aspects they were least happy with, and/or they wrote that they were very happy so far and did not have any complaints. In contrast, most staff (n = 28, 87.5%) expressed some kind of concern.

Kindergarten parents (n = 17, 7.6% of all parents) mentioned a major issue of insufficient staff to children.

Parents' concerns about their individual centres (n = 102 negative statements) are outlined below and illustrated with some direct quotations. Parents expressed 13 types of concerns:

(a) the way staff cared for children, for example:

> *"Saying things in front of children, or to the children where children can take it to heart e.g. what a bad cough, don't come back until its better" (kindergarten parent);*
>
> *"Not enough attention to heeds/desires of the 'individual' child. A tendency to do things 'en masse' or be left out and made to feel awkward. (I realise there are not enough hours in the day for teachers to give much one-to-one attention to children)" (kindergarten parent);*
>
> *"There's just one staff member who seems disinterested and bored. I find that a bit hard to take" (childcare parent);*
>
> *"Lack of motherliness and even-handedness" (kohanga parent);*
>
> *"Parent supervision quality varies" (city playcentre parent). "Parents are untrained to deal with certain situations that may occur during a session, therefore everybody deals with a situation in different ways" (playcentre parent);*
>
> *"Bullying from one problem child and the apparent inability of anyone to find a solution to it" (playcentre parent).*

(b) the policies and practices of parent-child separation, for example:

> *"I know I arrive during staff lunch breaks with my baby but I like to hand him over to a staff person. With lots of small ones already there it can be a bit difficult. I usually find my-self staying until some-one has got back from their lunch-break" (childcare parent who was a staff member at the centre);*
>
> *"Because the staff are assigned to areas rather than to specific children, it is often difficult to develop a close relationship and "be true" for the child experiencing separation anxiety" (childcare parent);*
>
> *"I myself am a little shy, and when I first brought my child here I was not shown anything or explained anything and I felt a bit left out and could do with some encouragement. When I first came I felt as though I wasn't doing my job right as a mother because it took 2 - 3 weeks for my child to settle in" (kindergarten parent).*

(c) the adequacy of provisions for meeting children's physical needs, for example:

> *"Food for younger children not adequately catered for. Also thought nappy changes too infrequent, at times" (childcare parent);*
>
> *"One little stick of carrot and 1/2 a glass of water or milk is not really substantial on a hot day when they are running round all the time" (kindergarten parent).*

(d) the adequacy of child supervision, for example:

> *"Sometimes fights between the children happen when there is no adult around. If a lot of adults are here, say 4+ they all talk together and the children run wild" (kohanga parent);*
>
> *"Teacher's are seen talking to parents and passers-by while children misbehave" (kindergarten parent);*
>
> *"When the kids are outside there are a few too many places to hide, and it is too hard to keep an eye on where they all are and what they are up to" (kindergarten parent).*

(e) the quality of the play environment, (including space, equipment, and physical surroundings), for example:

> *"Playground alterations have been going on for 12 months" (childcare parent);*
>
> *"I would like to see a properly equipment music corner with a good variety of real instruments instead of, or as well as homemade shakers, etc" (playcentre parent);*
>
> *"The indoor space can be cramped when all the children are forced to stay inside due to bad weather" (playcentre parent);*
>
> *"We need more room" (kohanga parent);*
>
> *"The playground is lacking in design imagination" (kindergarten parent);*

(f) the type and range of activities, for example:

> *"Outings seem sporadic and motivation seems to be only for exercise. No themes followed up, not enough use made of available mini-bus" (childcare parent);*

> *"More physical activities needed for older children" (childcare parent);*
>
> *"More variety in the daily activities" (kohanga parent);*
>
> *"I would like a little teaching e.g. counting and alphabet (playcentre parent);*
>
> *"If it is a fine day Ricky is outside playing all morning so I feel that he might as well be at home playing. At the other kindy they did more with the kids (kindergarten parent);*
>
> *"Lack of bi- or multicultural activities and pictures on walls. Should be a language awareness programme" (kindergarten parent).*

(g) programme organization and scheduling (mentioned by mainly kindergarten parents), for example :

> *"The language is wonderful but some children - especially the older ones get bored without specific activities" (kohanga parent);*
>
> *"Doesn't seem to be allocated time for morning-tea" (kindergarten parent);*
>
> *"No mat-time for afternoon session - but there should be" (kindergarten parent).*

(h) staff employment policies and practices, for example:

> *"It would be good to see male staff around as well" (childcare parent);*
>
> *"It often takes months to find out who is new on the staff - name tags or a photo on the board would help" (childcare parent);*
>
> *"I wish the staff were on better salaries (child care parent);*
>
> *"It may be an advantage for some input from educationally qualified kaiako who have been trained ... so the educational content of the programme may be improved" (kohanga parent).*

(i) the functioning, role, and composition of committees, including:

> *"Lack of 'good' communication/cooperation - from a treasurer's point of view, like why didn't I get this bill 2 weeks ago?" (playcentre parent);*
>
> *"Apparent disharmony in committee - enough to put one off - its their problem" (kindergarten parent);*
>
> *"Committee - not enough changes in committee members (kindergarten parent).*

(j) recognition and support of their wishes and needs to make life easier, for example:

> *"No box from which parents can collect children's artistic work" (childcare parent);*
>
> *"Lack of off-street parking where one can safely drop off and collect children" (childcare parent);*
>
> *"My son's inability to find shoes and clothes at the end of a session on a hot day" (kindergarten parent);*
>
> *"My child has been 4 - 5 months in morning kindy and has not received a theme book. She now goes to school in 4 weeks. Other children have been given one after 2 - 3 weeks" (kindergarten parent);*
>
> *"The toilet facilities for adults" (kindergarten parent);*
>
> *"I really dislike getting sent raffle tickets and feel the way they are distributed is a bit of an imposition" (kindergarten parent).*

(k) support of family values (mentioned by one parent):

> *"Have seen my vegetarian child eating meat! Just as well I'm not fanatical" (childcare parent).*

(l) parent apathy (mentioned by some parents who were involved at committee/management levels), for example:

> *"More whanau support so that most jobs do not fall on committee members" (kohanga parent);*
>
> *[Least happy with] "Only the poor turnouts at meetings" (playcentre parent);*

> *"It's always the same ones who have to do all the work. There are a lot of people who can't be bothered to come to meetings. They will do their parent-help at the centre but that's about it" (playcentre parent);*

> *"... because both parents of children at this centre work, the parents seem reluctant to take on further commitments" (childcare parent).*

and, (m) barriers to involvement, including rules about parent-helping and staff-committee communication with parents, for example:

> *"At times a lack of communication between organizers and parents, especially in the case of trips, as of late" (playcentre parent);*

> *"Even going to the management meetings, I sill find it hard sometimes to know about everything going on. There could be a bit more information posted on the notice-board at the front door about possible trips and projects - with invitations to parents and requests for help, etc" (childcare parent);*

> *"I never get to help out with excursions because younger siblings are not allowed and I can't always find a babysitter (kindergarten parent).*

Staff had two main worries: an inadequate trained staff-child ratio (mentioned by four kindergarten staff), and insufficient funds (mentioned by eight kindergarten, playcentre, and childcare staff). In addition, a playcentre supervisor complained about government involvement:

> *"The changes I have noticed over the last 10 - 15 years seem to be undermining the 'do-it-yourself preschool' that playcentre is. The high standards required by government for funding tend to be expensive, impractical and discourage initiative".*

In relation to specific problems within their own centres, concerns were expressed about:

(a) lack of support and understanding from parents/committee, for example:

> *"It's rarely acknowledged that we do considerable work in our own time, e.g. attending evening meetings" (kindergarten teacher);*

> *"Parents should not take us for granted, for example picking up their child late when we only have a short time to have our lunch" (kindergarten teacher);*

> *"The current structure of being employed by the parents of the children we care for ... creates an 'us and them' mentality amongst staff" (community centre childcare staff member);*

> *"More kaumatua involvement" (kaiako).*

(b) the need for more play equipment and more age-appropriate equipment (this was not mentioned by any kindergarten staff), for example:

> *"More equipment needed e.g. 3-D didactic equip" (playcentre supervisor);*

> *"Equipment is low. Always would like new and varied things" (childcare director);*

(c) the education and attitudes of staff (mentioned only by childcare staff, n = 5), for example:

> *"Some staff members need to further their education" (childcare staff member);*

> *"Staff not completing training that they have agreed upon (childcare director)*

> *"I don't like the lack of professionalism of some of the staff. Many criticise and judge parents" (childcare staff member);*

(d) insufficient room space (mentioned by three childcare and playcentre staff), for example:

> *"The size of our indoor area; its pretty cramped on a wet day, and there isn't much space for adults or office-type space for supervisors" (playcentre supervisor).*

or alternatively, too much space (mentioned only by some kindergarten staff)

> *"Kindergarten and building too big. Not enough time because of size of kindergarten to keep environment changing, interesting, individual planning, etc" (kindergarten head teacher).*

and,

(e) parent disinterest in training as a playcentre supervisor (mentioned by one playcentre supervisor):

> *"No one is interested in doing further training, that is training as a supervisor ... few parents feel they have anything to gain"*

All three childcare head staff and one playcentre supervisor made self-reflective comments in replying to the question of what they were least happy with about their centre, other staff did not. Their different comments were:

> *"I know this centre could go in so many positive directions. The process is underway and many aspects have improved .. but I'm impatient. I envision a more clearly defined overall programme. I would like to do more for the parents (i.e. workshops, seminars on parenting, etc.);*

> *"Programme not always working well, am trying to cater for babies right through to 4.6 year olds";*

> *"Programme planning, still searching for the best way to plan for our children";*

> *"I need to plan more".*

### *3.5.3 Parent and staff ratings of centre quality*

This section looks at parent and staff perceptions of the quality of their individual centres through their mean ratings of centre quality on various criteria. The data is shown in Table 9 and statistically significant differences between parent and staff mean ratings of centre quality are indicated.

**TABLE 9**

***Parent and Staff Ratings of Centre Quality on Various Criteria***

| **Quality Criteria** | **Parents** | **Staff** | **Significance** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Children's Happiness** | Mean (S.D.) | Mean (S.D). | T-Value | p |
| Staff show children they care | 2.91 (0.33) | 2.90 (0.31) | 0.13 | .90 |
| Staff are responsive to children | 2.86 (0.37) | 2.87 (0.35) | -0.08 | .94 |
| Sensitive settling-in process | 2.80 (0.49) | 2.87 (0.35) | -0.95 | .35 |
| Peer group stability | 2.80 (0.43) | 2.73 (0.45) | 0.72 | .48 |
| Staff home-visit families | 1.84 (0.91) | 1.59 (0.83) | 1.54 | .13 |
| Parent contact with centre encouraged | 2.79 (0.44) | 2.73 (0.45) | 0 .66 | .51 |
| Children's physical needs are met | 2.90 (0.33) | 2.97 (0.19) | -1.56 | .13 |
| Excessive punishment is not used | 2.89 (0.44) | 2.67 (0.71) | 1.67 | .11 |
| Home like pleasant atmosphere | 2.91 (0.31) | 2.87 (0.35) | 0.53 | .60 |
| **Safety, Health and Hygiene** | | | | |
| Clear pathways between activities | 2.81 (0.43) | 2.57 (0.50) | 2.55 | .02 * |
| Toys and equipment safe/maintained | 2.89 (0.33) | 2.70 (0.54) | 1.84 | .08 |
| Children supervised at all times | 2.78 (0.48) | 2.87 (0.43) | -1.07 | .29 |
| Clean building, facilities, toys | 2.96 (0.21) | 2.81 (0.40) | 2.13 | .04 * |
| Personal hygiene rules taught | 2.85 (0.38) | 2.97 (0.18) | -2.81 | .01 * |
| Staff model good health and hygiene | 2.99 (0.10) | 2.89 (0.32) | 1.61 | .12 |
| Provision for sick children | 2.39 (0.75) | 2.21 (0.77) | 1.19 | .24 |
| Notification of infections/diseases | 2.53 (0.70) | 2.35 (0.72) | 1.27 | .21 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Programme** | | | | |
| Written programme schedule | 2.27 (0.77) | 2.18 (0.77) | 0.57 | .57 |
| Stimulating, interesting activities | 2.81 (0.42) | 2.77 (0.43) | 0.49 | .63 |
| Programme based on child/family needs | 2.47 (0.65) | 2.37 (0.72) | 0.74 | .46 |
| Sufficient toys, equipment, resources | 2.89 (0.37) | 2.60 (0.62) | 2.52 | .02 * |
| Developmentally appropriate | 2.90 (0.32) | 2.73 (0.52) | 1.67 | .11 |
| Balance child and staff initiated activities | 2.82 (0.46) | 2.83 (0.47) | -0.09 | .93 |
| Balance indoor and outdoor activities | 2.93 (0.27) | 2.73 (0.58) | 1.82 | .08 |
| Activities for different sized groups | 2.90 (0.35) | 2.38 (0.28) | 0.90 | .38 |
| Provisions for special needs children | 2.55 (0.67) | 2.59 (0.64) | -0.30 | .76 |
| Cultural awareness promoted | 2.57 (0.60) | 2.20 (0.71) | 2.69 | .01* |
| Biculturalism promoted | 2.46 (0.72) | 2.07 (0.70) | 2.77 | .01 * |
| Family values and customs supported | 2.68 (0.54) | 2.37 (0.62) | 2.67 | .01 * |
| Non-sexist | 2.74 (0.53) | 2.57 (0.68) | 1.34 | .19 |
| Staff join in children's play | 2.87 (0.37) | 2.67 (0.61) | 1.58 | .12 |
| Regular outings and excursions | 2.65 (0.58) | 2.83 (0.46) | -2.01 | .05 |
| Staff carry out formative evaluations | 2.64 (0.62) | 2.38 (0.73) | 1.77 | .09 |
| **Staffing** | | | | |
| Qualified staff | 2.87 (0.44) | 2.59 (0.62) | 2.48 | .02 * |
| Staff have parenthood experience | 2.58 (0.64) | 2.11 (0.83) | 2.85 | .01 * |
| Staff are experienced with young children | 2.92 (0.31) | 2.90 (0.30) | 0.27 | .79 |
| Staff are warm and caring people | 2.89 (0.33) | 2.87 (0.34) | 0.34 | .74 |
| Staff work together as a team | 2.88 (0.37) | 2.65 (0.61) | 2.06 | .05 * |
| Staff meet for programme planning | 2.92 (0.59) | 2.80 (0.48) | 1.22 | .23 |
| Good staff leadership | 2.82 (0.45) | 2.68 (0.60) | 1.25 | .22 |
| Refresher training | 2.72 (0.50) | 2.29 (0.74) | 3.12 | .00 * |
| Stability in staffing | 2.70 (0.54) | 2.34 (0.61) | 2.96 | .01 * |
| Professionalism considered important | 2.81 (0.47) | 2.59 (0.64) | 1.70 | .10 |
| Provisions for staff in environment | 2.52 (0.68) | 2.52 (0.72) | 0.07 | .94 |
| Group size not too big | 2.72 (0.55) | 2.47 (0.73) | 1.83 | .08 |
| High ratio staff to children | 2.48 (0.70) | 2.60 (0.62) | -1.01 | .32 |
| **Parent, Family and Community Involvement** | | | | |
| Parents and families made welcome | 2.89 (0.37) | 2.83 (0.38) | 0.74 | .46 |
| Community members involved | 2.48 (0.69) | 2.17 (0.75) | 2.19 | .03 * |
| Outside professional assistance used | 2.69 (0.55) | 2.40 (0.62) | 2.38 | .02 * |
| Parents informed about philosophy etc | 2.50 (0.66) | 2.45 (0.58) | 0.17 | .87 |
| Parent education provided | 2.18 (0.77) | 2.28 (0.65) | -0.72 | .47 |
| Parents regarded as joint partners | 2.65 (0.59) | 2.83 (0.46) | -1.93 | .06 |
| Parents contribute to decision-making | 2.82 (0.38) | 2.47 (0.57) | 3.32 | .00 * |
| Friendship and support for parents | 2.71 (0.55) | 2.57 (0.63) | 1.19 | .24 |
| Child progress/activity home reports | 2.43 (0.75) | 2.23 (0.63) | 0 .07 | .94 |
| Provisions for parents in environment | 2.04 (0.76) | 1.93 (0.74) | 0 .77 | . 45 |

*$p < .05$

Centres were rated by staff and parents (combined mean parent/staff scores) as being top notch when it came to:

- staff modelling good health and hygiene practices,
- meeting children's physical needs,
- staff having previous experience with young children,
- teaching children good personal hygiene,
- having a pleasant atmosphere,
- having a clean building, facilities, and
- having a staff who were warm and caring people.

They were rated by staff and parents as being the poorest on practices of:

- carrying out home-visiting,

- providing for parents needs in the environment,
- having a written programme schedule,
- providing parent education opportunities,
- promoting biculturalism,
- providing for children when they are sick,
- supporting community involvement,
- providing parents with information or reports on children's activities and progress.

The 'Significance' column in Table 9 shows that on a number of criteria there were statistically significant differences between parent and staff ratings. Staff ratings were significantly higher than parents only on the criterion of children being taught good personal hygiene. This suggests that staff perceived that they are doing better on this criterion than parents thought they were. The criteria which parents' rated as being higher in quality than what staff ratings would indicate, were:

- clear pathways between activity areas,
- clean building, facilities and toys,
- sufficient toys, equipment and resources,
- promotion of cultural awareness,
- promotion of biculturalism,
- support of family values and customs,
- qualified staff,
- staff with parenthood experience,
- staff work well together as a team,
- staff engage in refresher training,
- stability in staffing,
- community involvement, and
- parent involvement in decision-making.

### *3.5.4 Differences and similarities of parent and staff ratings between centres*

Table 10 shows that more parent than staff ratings were significantly different ($p < .05$). This indicates that there was greater similarity amongst staff from the different centres in their perceptions of centre quality, whereas parents varied considerably in their judgements.

**TABLE 10**

***Parents' Mean Ratings of Centre Quality Across Four Types of Centres and Statistically Significant Differences Between Their Ratings.***

| Quality Criteria | Kindergarten | Childcare | Playcentre | Kohanga | Significance | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Children's Happiness** | Mean (S.D.) | Mean (S.D.) | Mean (S.D.) | Mean (S.D.) | p | Scheffé |
| Staff show they care | 2.86 (0.41) | 3.00 (0.00) | 2.92 (0.27) | 2.92 (0.29) | .09 | None |
| Responsive staff | 2.81 (0.43) | 2.96 (0.19) | 2.92 (0.27) | 2.75 (0.45) | .04 | None |
| Settling-in process | 2.72 (0.58) | 2.96 (0.19) | 2.84 (0.37) | 2.75 (0.45) | .02 | C > K |
| Peer group stability | 2.77 (0.44) | 2.87 (0.34) | 2.73 (0.53) | 2.83 (0.39) | .41 | None |
| Home-visiting | 2.23 (0.88) | 1.23 (0.61) | 1.32 (0.65) | 1.46 (0.69) | .00 | K > C, P, T |
| Parent contact encouraged | 2.74 (0.49) | 2.95 (0.36) | 2.96 (0.20) | 2.60 (0.52) | .05 | None |
| Physical needs are met | 2.85 (0.40) | 3.00 (0.00) | 2.96 (0.20) | 2.83 (0.39) | .03 | None |
| Non-excessive punishment | 2.87 (0.47) | 3.00 (0.00) | 2.92 (0.40) | 2.50 (0.91) | .00 | K, C > T |
| Pleasant atmosphere | 2.91 (0.29) | 2.96 (0.19) | 2.92 (0.39) | 2.50 (0.52) | .00 | K C, P > T |
| **Safety, Health and Hygiene** | | | | | | |
| Division of space | 2.85 (0.36) | 2.83 (0.47) | 2.72 (0.46) | 2.50 (0.67) | .03 | None |
| Safety of environment | 2.94 (0.25) | 2.89 (0.37) | 2.85 (0.37) | 2.42 (0.52) | .00 | K, C, P > T |
| Supervision | 2.72 (0.52) | 2.95 (0.30) | 2.84 (0.37) | 2.55 (0.69) | .01 | C > K |
| Clean environment | 2.97 (0.18) | 3.00 (0.00) | 2.85 (0.46) | 3.00 (0.00) | .02 | C > P |
| Children's hygiene habits | 2.79 (0.43) | 2.98 (0.14) | 2.77 (0.51) | 3.00 (0.00) | .01 | C > K |
| Model good health/hygiene | 3.00 (0.00) | 2.96 (0.19) | 3.00 (0.00) | 3.00 (0.00) | .18 | None |
| Sick child provisions | 2.30 (0.79) | 2.74 (0.45) | 2.22 (0.80) | 2.25 (0.97) | .01 | C > K |
| Notify about infections | 2.41 (0.74) | 2.73 (0.53) | 2.45 (0.76) | 2.75 (0.62) | .04 | None |
| **Programme** | | | | | | |
| Written programme schedule | 2.34 (0.75) | 2 47 (0.69) | 1.95 (0.87) | 1.58 (0.52) | .00 | K, C > T |
| Stimulating activities | 2.82 (0.43) | 2.87 (0.34) | 2.84 (0.37) | 2.33 (0.49) | .00 | K, C, P > T |
| Based on child and family needs | 2.47 (0.67) | 2.59 (0.57) | 2.57 (0.51) | 1.70 (0.68) | .00 | K, C, P > T |
| Sufficient equipment, etc | 2.94 (0.28) | 2.94 (0.23) | 2.92 (0.28) | 2.17 (0.84) | .00 | K, C, P > T |
| Developmentally appropriate | 2.91 (0.23) | 2.93 (0.26) | 2.96 (0.20) | 2.46 (0.69) | .00 | K ,C, P > T |
| Balance of child/staff activities | 2.83 (0.44) | 2.90 (0.30) | 2.81 (0.49) | 2.42 (0.80) | .01 | K, C > T |
| Indoor/outdoor activities | 2.95 (0.22) | 2.98 (0.14) | 2.96 (0.20) | 2.42 (0.70) | .00 | K, C ,P >T |
| Different group sized activities | 2.89 (0.36) | 2.98 (0.14) | 2.80 (0.50) | 2.83 (0.39) | .14 | None |
| Provisions for special needs | 2.49 (0.69) | 2.81 (0.51) | 2.59 (0.59) | 2.09 (0.83) | .01 | C > T |
| Cultural awareness | 2.59 (0.58) | 2.63 (0.53) | 2.38 (0.77) | 2.50 (0.67) | .35 | None |
| Biculturalism promoted | 2.48 (0.70) | 2.41 (0.76) | 2.30 (0.77) | 2.82 (0.41) | .24 | None |
| Support family values/customs | 2.63 (0.58) | 2.84 (0.37) | 2.59 (0.67) | 2.75 (0.45) | .11 | None |
| Non-sexist | 2.69 (0.41) | 2.86 (0.40) | 2.76 (0.60) | 2.64 (0.67) | .20 | None |
| Staff play with children | 2.82 (0.43) | 2.94 (0.23) | 2.89 (0.33) | 2.92 (0.29) | .21 | None |
| Outings and excursions | 2.54 (0.66) | 2.71 (0.50) | 2.85 (0.37) | 2.92 (0.29) | .02 | None |
| Programme evaluation | 2.69 (0.55) | 2.80 (0.50) | 2.61 (0.58) | 1.55 (0.69) | .00 | K, C, P >T |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Staffing** | | | | | | |
| Qualified staff | 2.96 (0.27) | 2.87 (0.35) | 3.00 (0.00) | 1.64 (0.81) | .00 | K, C, P > T |
| Staff are parents themselves | 2.34 (0.77) | 2.83 (0.48) | 3.00 (0.00) | 2.58 (0.59) | .00 | P, T > K |
| Staff are experienced | 2.95 (0.26) | 2.93 (0.27) | 3.88 (0.33) | 2.67 (0.65) | .02 | K > T |
| Warm and caring people | 2.87 (0.36) | 2.95 (0.23) | 2.92 (0.27) | 2.83 (0.39) | .44 | None |
| Team-work | 2.88 (0.37) | 2.94 (0.23) | 2.85 (0.37) | 2.58 (0.67) | .02 | C > T |
| Meet for programme planning | 2.93 (0.29) | 2.94 (0.25) | 2.65 (0.57) | Did not ask | .00 | C, K > P |
| Good staff leadership | 2.87 (0.38) | 2.87 (0.34) | 2.78 (0.42) | 2.00 (0.82) | .00 | K, C, P > T |
| Refresher training | 2.83 (0.38) | 2.65 (0.53) | 2.82 (0.40) | 1.89 (0.78) | .00 | K, C, P > T |
| Stability in staffing | 2.65 (0.55) | 2.88 (0.33) | 2.63 (0.65) | 2.50 (0.85) | .04 | None |
| Professionalism important | 2.90 (0.33) | 2.80 (0.41) | 2.77 (0.53) | 2.09 (0.94) | .00 | K, C, P > T |
| Provisions for staff | 2.64 (0.61) | 2.79 (0.41) | 1.96 (0.79) | 1.64 (0.67) | .00 | C > P T K>T |
| Group size | 2.63 (0.61) | 2.91 (0.30) | 2.89 (0.43) | 2.50 (0.71) | .00 | C > T |
| Ratio of staff to children | 2.25 (0.76) | 2.89 (0.32) | 2.77 (0.43) | 2.11 (0.78) | .00 | C >TK P>T |
| **Parent, Family, and Community Involvement** | | | | | | |
| Parents and families welcomed | 2.86 (0.44) | 2.96 (0.19) | 2.96 (0.20) | 2.73 (0.47) | .10 | None |
| Community involvement | 2.50 (0.68) | 2.30 (0.76) | 2.63 (0.58) | 2.78 (0.67) | .13 | None |
| Professional assistance | 2.70 (0.53) | 2.73 (0.51) | 2.71 (0.63) | 2.40 (0.70) | .39 | None |
| Informed about philosophy, etc | 2.50 (0.65) | 2.58 (0.61) | 2.65 (0.63) | 1.82 (0.75) | .00 | K, P, C > T |
| Parent education | 2.10 (0.77) | 2.36 (0.72) | 2.39 (0.72) | 1.73 (0.79) | .02 | None |
| Parent/staff partnership | 2.58 (0.63) | 2.78 (0.47) | 2.88 (0.34) | 2.37 (0.93) | .02 | None |
| Parents join-in decision-making | 2.81 (0.39) | 2.77 (0.43) | 2.92 (0.27) | 3.00 (0.00) | .14 | None |
| Parent friendship | 2.62 (0.63) | 2.88 (0.33) | 2.83 (0.38) | 2.58 (0.67) | .03 | None |
| Report about child progress | 2.07 (0.76) | 2.51 (0.61) | 2.65 (0.56) | 1.75 (0.87) | .00 | P > T, K C > T |
| Provisions for parents | 1.98 (0.79) | 2.17 (0.68) | 2.00 (0.76) | 2.18 (0.75) | .44 | None |

* K = Kindergarten, C = Childcare, P = Playcentre, T = Te Kohanga Reo

Childcare parents rated the settling-in process in their centres as more sensitive than kindergarten parents.

Kindergarten parents placed greater importance on the practice of home-visiting (see Section 3.3.3) and Table 10 shows that they also rated it as being better done at their centres than did parents at other centres.

The cleanliness of toys, facilities and equipment was rated significantly higher by parents at the childcare centres than at the playcentres. The magnitude of the playcentre parents' mean rating indicates, though, that they still considered their particular centre to be of a satisfactory standard.

Staff meetings for programme planning was given a significantly lower rating by parents at playcentre than at other centres. This difference may be related to greater parent involvement in programming decisions in playcentre because of its nature as a parent cooperative.

Kohanga parents' mean rating of staff not using excessive punishment on children was significantly lower than kindergarten and childcare parents. This difference may reflect the lower importance that kohanga parents placed on not using excessive punishment as a criterion of a good-quality childhood centre (see Section 3.3.3), rather than parents' perceptions of punishment tending to be more excessive at their kohanga. Kohanga parents' lower rating of the importance of a pleasant atmosphere as an indicator of a good-quality centre (see Section 3.3.3) may also be associated with their significantly lower rating of the actual atmosphere of their kohanga in contrast to the higher ratings of parents at the other centres.

Child safety was of greater concern to the kohanga parents than parents at the other centres, as indicated by the statistically significant difference between group ratings of their centre's on this criterion.

On a number of programme rating criteria, kohanga parents' mean scores were significantly lower than kindergarten and childcare parents, and sometimes playcentre parents as well (for example, the criteria of: programme evaluation, a written programme schedule, developmentally appropriate activities, and a balance of child-staff initiated activities). Kohanga parents' lower ratings of different aspects of their centre's programme may be related to the absence of staff with recognized (by the Ministry) early childhood qualifications? At the other types of centres, parents' mean ratings of the criterion of qualified staff were significantly higher than kohanga parents' mean rating.

Playcentre and kohanga parents' ratings of their centres ability to provide for staff needs in the environment were significantly lower than childcare and kindergartens parents' ratings.

Playcentre and childcare parents' mean ratings of whether they received adequate reports about their child's activities and progress were significantly higher than kohanga and parents' mean ratings. The magnitude of the mean scores, however, indicates that this criterion was generally not perceived to be sufficiently met across all types of centres.

Table 11 below provides data on staff ratings of their particular centres quality on the various criterion. An asterisk has been placed beside the Scheffe' test results that indicate a statistically significant difference between kohanga staff scores and those of staff at other centres because this should be ignored due to the small sample size (only one of the two kaiako in this study provided ratings).

**TABLE 11**

***Staff Mean Ratings of Centre Quality Across Four Types of Centres and Statistically Significant Differences Between their Ratings.***

| Quality Criteria | Kindergarten | Childcare | Playcentre | Kohanga | Significance | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Children's Happiness** | Mean (S.D.) | Mean (S.D.) | Mean (S.D). | Mean (S.D.) | p | Scheffé |
| Staff show they care | 3.00 (0.00) | 2.83 (0.38) | 3.00 (0.00) | 3.00 (0.00) | .56 | None |
| Responsive staff | 3.00 (0.00) | 2.78 (0.43) | 3.00 (0.00) | 3.00 (0.00) | .41 | None |
| Settling-in process | 3.00 (0.00) | 2.83 (0.38) | 3.00 (0.00) | 2.00 (0.00) | .03 | K > T * |
| Peer group stability | 2.38 (0.52) | 2.89 (0.32) | 2.67 (0.58) | 3.00 (0.00) | .04 | None |
| Home-visiting | 2.50 (0.76) | 1.06 (0.24) | 1.57 (0.58) | 3.00 (0.00) | .00 | T > C* K > C |
| Parent contact encouraged | 2.88 (0.35) | 2.61 (0.50) | 3.00 (0.00) | 3.00 (0.00) | .33 | None |
| Physical needs are met | 3.00 (0.00) | 2.94 (0.24) | 3.00 (0.00) | 3.00 (0.00) | .88 | None |
| Non-excessive punishment | 2.75 (0.71) | 2.67 (0.69) | 3.00 (0.00) | 1.00 (0.00) | .09 | None |
| Pleasant atmosphere | 3.00 (0.00) | 2.78 (0.43) | 3.00 (0.00) | 3.00 (0.00) | .41 | None |
| **Safety, Health and Hygiene** | | | | | | |
| Division of space | 2.70 (0.46) | 2.59 (0.51) | 2.00 (0.00) | 3.00 (0.00) | .07 | None |
| Safety of environment | 3.00 (0.00) | 2.50 (0.62) | 3.00 (0.00) | 0.00 (0.00) | .04 | None |
| Supervision | 3.00 (0.00) | 2.78 (0.55) | 3.00 (0.00) | 3.00 (0.00) | .59 | None |
| Clean environment | 3.00 (0.00) | 2.72 (0.46) | 2.75 (0.50) | 3.00 (0.00) | .41 | None |
| Children's hygiene habits | 3.00 (0.00) | 2.94 (0.24) | 3.00 (0.00) | 3.00 (0.00) | .88 | None |
| Model good health/hygiene | 3.00 (0.00) | 2.83 (0.38) | 3.00 (0.00) | 0.00 (0.00) | .42 | None |
| Sick child provisions | 2.14 (0.69) | 2.33 (0.77) | 2.00 (1.00) | 1.00 (0.00) | .38 | None |
| Notify about infections | 2.57 (0.54) | 2.28 (0.75) | 2.00 (1.00) | 3.00 (0.00) | .52 | None |
| **Programme** | | | | | | |
| Written programme schedule | 2.71 (0.49) | 2.11 (0.76) | 1.33 (0.58) | 0.00 (0.00) | .02 | K > C |
| Stimulating, interesting activities | 3.00 (0.00) | 2.72 (0.46) | 2.67 (0.58) | 2.00 (0.00) | .11 | None |
| Based on child and family needs | 2.75 (0.46) | 2.28 (0.75) | 2.33 (0.58) | 1.00 (0.00) | .10 | None |
| Sufficient equipment, etc | 3.00 (0.00) | 2.33 (0.69) | 3.00 (0.00) | 3.00 (0.00) | .03 | None |
| Developmentally appropriate | 3.00 (0.00) | 2.61 (0.61) | 2.67 (0.58) | 3.00 (0.00) | .35 | None |
| Balance of child/staff activities | 2.88 (0.35) | 2.78 (0.55) | 3.00 (0.00) | 0.00 (0.00) | .72 | None |
| Balance indoor/outdoor activities | 3.00 (0.00) | 2.72 (0.58) | 2.67 (0.58) | 1.00 (0.00) | .01 | K, C > T* |
| Different sized group activities | 3.00 (0.00) | 2.78 (0.43) | 3.00 (0.00) | 2.00 (0.00) | .05 | None |
| Provisions for special needs | 2.86 (0.38) | 2.53 (0.72) | 2.50 (0.71) | 2.00 (0.00) | .54 | None |
| Cultural awareness | 2.50 (0.54) | 2.00 (0.77) | 2.33 (0.58) | 3.00 (0.00) | .25 | None |
| Biculturalism promoted | 2.38 (0.52) | 1.88 (0.78) | 2.33 (0.58) | 2.00 (0.00) | .39 | None |
| Family values supported | 2.25 (0.71) | 2.44 (0.62) | 2.33 (0.58) | 3.00 (0.00) | .83 | None |
| Non-sexist | 2.87 (0.35) | 2.50 (0.79) | 2.33 (0.58) | 2.00 (0.00) | .43 | None |
| Staff join in children's play | 2.25 (0.89) | 2.81 (0.40) | 3.00 (0.00) | 3.00 (0.00) | .12 | None |
| Outings and excursions | 3.00 (0.00) | 2.72 (0.58) | 3.00 (0.00) | 3.00 (0.00) | .48 | None |
| Programme evaluation | 2.86 (0.38) | 2.33 (0.77) | 2.00 (0.00) | 1.00 (0.00) | .05 | None |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Staffing** | | | | | | |
| Qualified staff | 3.00 (0.00) | 2.39 (0.61) | 3.00 (0.00) | 1.00 (0.00) | .00 | P > T* K> C,T* |
| Staff are parents themselves | 1.50 (0.84) | 2.06 (0.75) | 3.00 (0.00) | 3.00 (0.00) | .02 | P > K |
| Staff are experienced | 3.00 (0.00) | 2.83 (0.38) | 3.00 (0.00) | 3.00 (0.00) | .53 | None |
| Warm and caring people | 3.00 (0.00) | 2.78 (0.43) | 3.00 (0.00) | 3.00 (0.00) | .37 | None |
| Team-work | 3.00 (0.00) | 2.39 (0.70) | 3.00 (0.00) | 3.00 (0.00) | .04 | None |
| Staff meet to plan programme | 3.00 (0.00) | 2.72 (0.58) | 2.75 (0.50) | Did not ask | .41 | None |
| Good staff leadership | 3.00 (0.00) | 2.56 (0.71) | 2.50 (0.58) | 3.00 (0.00) | .31 | None |
| Refresher training | 2.26 (0.52) | 2.06 (0.73) | 3.00 (0.00) | 1.00 (0.00) | .01 | None |
| Stability in staffing | 2.39 (0.76) | 2.35 (0.61) | 2.50 (0.58) | 2.00 (0.00) | .90 | None |
| Professionalism important | 3.00 (0.00) | 2.44 (0.63) | 2.33 (1.16) | 0.00 (0.00) | .09 | None |
| Provisions for staff | 2.38 (0.74) | 2.83 (0.38) | 1.75 (0.96) | 1.00 (0.00) | .00 | C > P. T* |
| Group size | 1.88 (0.84) | 2.61 (0.61) | 3.00 (0.00) | 3.00 (0.00) | .03 | None |
| Ratio of staff to children | 1.88 (0.64) | 2.83 (0.38) | 3.00 (0.00) | 3.00 (0.00) | .00 | C, P > K |
| **Parent, Family and Community Involvement** | | | | | | |
| Parents and families welcomed | 2.88 (0.35) | 2.83 (0.38) | 2.67 (0.58) | 3.00 (0.00) | .85 | None |
| Community involvement | 2.63 (0.52) | 1.83 (0.71) | 2.67 (0.58) | 3.00 (0.00) | .02 | None |
| Professional assistance | 2.75 (0.46) | 2.17 (0.62) | 2.67 (0.58) | 3.00 (0.00) | .08 | None |
| Informed about philosophy, etc. | 2.29 (0.49) | 2.56 (0.62) | 2.33 (0.58) | 3.00 (0.00) | .57 | None |
| Parent education | 2.43 (0.54) | 2.22 (0.73) | 2.00 (0.00) | 3.00 (0.00) | .54 | None |
| Parent-staff partnership | 2.88 (0.35) | 2.78 (0.55) | 3.00 (0.00) | 3.00 (0.00) | .85 | None |
| Join-in decision-making | 2.25 (0.46) | 2.44 (0.62) | 3.00 (0.00) | 3.00 (0.00) | .20 | None |
| Parent friendship and support | 2.75 (0.46) | 2.50 (0.71) | 2.33 (0.58) | 3.00 (0.00) | .64 | None |
| Reports about child progress | 2.13 (0.64) | 2.11 (0.58) | 3.00 (0.00) | 3.00 (0.00) | .07 | None |
| Provisions for parents | 1.88 (0.35) | 2.00 (0.84) | 1.33 (0.58) | 3.00 0.00) | .24 | None |

** K = Kindergarten, C = Childcare, P = Playcentre, T = Te Kohanga Reo

Kindergarten staff rated their practice of home-visiting as being between the partially to fully met marks. Their mean rating was significantly higher than that of childcare staff. The actual differences between the groups mean rating scores are large, indicating that home-visiting was probably not carried out by playcentre and childcare staff but it was by at least some kindergarten staff.

Staff at the kindergartens, in contrast to the childcare centres, rated their centres significantly higher on the criterion of a planned written programme schedule. Looking at the actual size of the differences between the group means, playcentres as well as childcare centres received lower ratings by their staff compared to the kindergartens.

On the criterion of staff parenthood experience playcentre staff rated their centres a "3", and their mean rating was significantly higher than kindergarten staff. Further, the size of the actual difference between childcare and kindergarten staff mean scores suggest that although the difference was statistically significant more childcare staff probably have parenthood experience than kindergarten staff.

The criterion of qualified staff was rated a "4" by all kindergarten and playcentre staff. A statistically significant difference was found between childcare and kindergarten staff mean rating scores, with childcare staff awarding their centres a lower rating.

The adult-child ratio was rated by kindergarten staff as being low. Childcare and playcentre staff mean rating scores of the adequacy of their adult-child ratios were significantly higher than kindergarten staff mean rating scores.

Provisions for parents and for staff needs at playcentres were rated lower by their staff than were adult provisions at the childcare centres. No other statistically significant differences between groups were found on these two criteria. But the size of the differences between the group mean rating scores suggests that playcentre staff perceived their centres to be doing less well than staff at the other centres on the criteria.

Access to refresher or on-going staff training appears to be possible in playcentre but not so likely at the other types of centres. Playcentre staff rated this criterion as being fully met, whereas childcare and kindergarten staff mean rating scores were significantly lower (p = .002). Note, though, that the Scheffe' test did not identify any statistically significant group differences.

Community involvement was given a significantly lower rating by childcare staff in contrast to the other staff groups (p = .018), however, no statistically significant pair-wise differences were found on staff ratings of this.

## *3.6 Observation of Programme Practices and Centre Environments*

### *3.6.1 Centre quality as assessed on the Quality Review Checklist*

This section presents data on the observed quality of the kindergartens, playcentres, and childcare centres. Centres were assessed on the same criteria which parents, staff, and experts rated the importance of (Section 3.3.2) and parents and staff rated their centres on (Section 3.5.3).

The observation and assessment tool was the Quality Review Checklist (QRC), including parent and staff interview schedules, developed for this purpose.(2)

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(2) Observational data from the Kohanga Reo is not included because when the QRC was trailed a number of problems with its methodology and content, particularly in terms of cultural appropriateness and relevance, were noted.

**TABLE 12**

*Centre QRC Mean Scores and Standard Deviations*

| Quality Criteria | Kindergarten | Childcare | Playcentre |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Children's Happiness** | Mean (S.D.) | Mean (S.D.) | Mean ( S.D.) |
| Staff show children they care about them | 3.75 (0.50) | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) |
| Staff are responsive to children | 3.50 (0.58) | 3.67 (0.58) | 4.00 (0.00) |
| Sensitive settling-in process | 3.75 (0.50) | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) |
| Peer group stability | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) |
| Staff home-visit families | 2.75 (0.50) | 1.00 (0.00) | 1.00 (0.00) |
| Parent contact encouraged | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) |
| Children's physical needs are met | 2.75 (0.50) | 3.67 (0.58) | 3.50 (0.71) |
| Excessive punishment is not used | 3.50 (0.58) | 3.67 (0.58) | 3.50 (0.71) |
| Home like pleasant atmosphere | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.33 (0.58) | 3.50 (0.71) |
| **Safety, Health and Hygiene** | | | |
| Clear pathways between activities | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.50 (0.71) |
| Toys and equipment safe/maintained | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.33 (1.15) | 3.50 (0.71) |
| Children supervised at all times | 3.75 (0.50) | 3.67 (0.58) | 3.50 (0.71) |
| Clean building, facilities, toys | 3.75 (0.50) | 3.67 (0.58) | 4.00 (0.00) |
| Personal hygiene taught | 2.75 (1.26) | 3.33 (0.58) | 2.00 (1.41) |
| Staff model good health/hygiene | 2.75 (0.96) | 3.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) |
| Provision for sick children | 2.50 (1.29) | 3.00 (0.00) | 3.50 (0.71) |
| Parents notified of any infection/disease | 3.25 (0.96) | 4.00 (0.00) | 2.50 (2.12) |
| **Programme** | | | |
| Written programme schedule | 2.50 (1.00) | 3.00 (0.00) | 1.00 (0.00) |
| Stimulating, interesting play activities | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) |
| Based on child and family needs | 3.00 (0.82) | 3.00 (0.00) | 3.50 (0.71) |
| Sufficient toys, equipment, etc | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) |
| Developmentally appropriate | 3.75 (0.58) | 3.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) |
| Balance child and staff initiated activities | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) |
| Balance of indoor/outdoor activities | 3.50 (0.58) | 2.67 (0.58) | 4.00 (0.00) |
| Different group sized activities | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.33 (1.15) | 4.00 (0.00) |
| Provisions for special needs | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.50 (0.71) |
| Cultural awareness promoted | 2.50 (1.29) | 1.67 (1.15) | 3.00 (0.00) |
| Biculturalism promoted | 2.00 (0.00) | 1.67 (1.15) | 2.51 (0.71) |
| Family values/customs supported | 3.25 (0.50) | 3.33 (0.58) | 4.00 (0.00) |
| Non-sexist | 3.75 (0.50) | 3.00 (1.00) | 4.00 (0.00) |
| Staff join in children's play | 3.25 (0.96) | 2.67 (1.15) | 4.00 (0.00) |
| Regular outings and excursions | 2.75 (0.50) | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.50 (0.71) |
| Formative programme evaluations | 3.25 (0.96) | 3.67 (0.58) | 4.00 (0.00) |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Staffing** | | | |
| Qualified staff | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.00 (0.00) | 3.00 (0.00) |
| Staff have parenthood experience | 3.25 (0.50) | 2.33 (1.15) | 4.00 (0.00) |
| Staff experienced with young children | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) |
| Staff are warm and caring people | 3.75 (0.50) | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) |
| Staff work together as a team | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) |
| Staff meet to plan programme | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) |
| Good staff leadership | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.67 (0.58) | 4.00 (0.00) |
| Regularly do refresher training | 3.25 (0.50) | 3.00 (1.73) | 3.50 (0.71) |
| Stability in staffing | 3.50 (0.58) | 3.67 (0.58) | 4.00 (0.00) |
| Professionalism important | 3.25 (0.96) | 3.33 (1.15) | 3.50 (0.71) |
| Provisions for staff | 3.25 (0.96) | 4.00 (0.00) | 2.50 (0.71) |
| Group size not too big | 3.50 (0.58) | 2.67 (1.15) | 4.00 (0.00) |
| High ratio staff to children | 2.50 (0.58) | 3.67 (0.58) | 4.00 (0.00) |
| **Parent. Family and Community Involvement** | | | |
| Parents and families welcomed | 3.50 (0.58) | 3.67 (0.58) | 4.00 (0.00) |
| Community involvement | 3.75 (0.50) | 3.67 (0.58) | 3.50 (0.71) |
| Outside professional assistance | 3.75 (0.50) | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.50 (0.71) |
| Informed about philosophy/practice | 3.75 (0.50) | 3.67 (0.58) | 4.00 (0.00) |
| Parent education provided | 3.00 (1.41) | 2.33 (0.58) | 4.00 (0.00) |
| Parents regarded as joint partners | 3.00 (0.82) | 3.67 (0.58) | 4.00 (0.00) |
| Parents join in decision-making | 4.00 (0.00) | 2.67 (1.53) | 4.00 (0.00) |
| Friendship/support for parents | 3.50 (0.58) | 4.00 (0.00) | 4.00 (0.00) |
| Child progress/activity reports | 2.50 (0.58) | 3.33 (1.15) | 3.50 (0.71) |
| Provisions for parents | 3.00 (0.00) | 2.67 (0.58) | 3.50 (0.71) |

Table 12 shows that all centres were rated a "4" on five criteria:

- a high level of peer group stability,
- encouraging parent contact with the centre,
- staff with previous experience
- a team-work approach amongst staff, and
- staff meetings (of some kind) for deciding about the programme and activities.

The criteria which one or more centres were not rated a "4" on, and the reasons for a lower rating will now be discussed in order of the criteria listed in Table 12.

### *Staff show children they care*

All centres, except for one kindergarten, fully met this criterion. Three of five parents interviewed at the kindergarten commented that one teacher was more caring towards the children than the other who was "sometimes detached", "often short with their children" and "inconsistent towards them". Their comments supported researcher observation and led to a decision to award a mostly met grade. At two childcare centres considerable interpersonal interaction and affection between staff and children was observed. They could have been awarded a higher grade, if one was on the QRC scale, than the other centres who also fully meet this criteria.

### *Staff are responsive to children*

Two kindergartens "fully met" this criterion for the reason that there was always at least one adult available to respond, and to be responsive, to the children's needs and social bids. Two other kindergartens "partially met" it because the teachers were not always observed to be, or able to be, responsive. For example, a parent commented that children often had difficulty teacher's attention when they were conversing with other adults. The teachers were observed to often ask children, who approached them while they were performing routine tasks such as preparing the morning-tea and talking on the telephone, to wait until they were available. One childcare centre was rated "partially met" because staff were mainly involved in caring for infants and toddlers. They appeared less interested and involved with older children, and the older children mostly gained attention either by 'playing-up' or when staff provided activities that were directed by them. Staff at one childcare centre were superior in their ability and enthusiasm to respond quickly and appropriately. Observations suggested two reasons. The first was a very high adult-child ratio. The second was a philosophy of staff being there to serve the children according to their interests and needs, that is a 'bottom-up' approach to interaction rather than 'top-down'.

### *Sensitive settling-in process*

At only one kindergarten was this criterion not fully met. Some of the kindergarten's parents commented that they felt disadvantaged compared to the parents and children who had attended the Wednesday afternoon play-group available for children not old enough to be accepted on the roll. No other procedures existed, such as a pre-entry session, for passing on information about kindergarten policies and easing children into the new environment. Parents were encouraged but not required to stay with their child when starting. Both playcentres met this criteria to a high level because there was a commitment towards settling in both children and parents. An Information Officer talked individually with new parents. Parents were introduced and encouraged to get to know other parents. Ways that other centres tried to ensure that the settling-in process was sensitive to children's and parents needs included the following observations. At a centre a childcare staff member lifted a child up to the window to wave good-bye to her mother. New children at another childcare centre were assigned a 'special friend' (a staff member) from their first day who accepted on-going responsibility for them. At a kindergarten new parents were asked to arrive early to pick up their child for the first few weeks.

### *Staff home-visit families*

At only one centre, a kindergarten whose teachers home-visited children during the transition from afternoon session (for younger children) to morning session (for older children), was this criterion fully met. At two other kindergartens home-visits were infrequent and carried out only when a problem was identified which teachers wished to discuss with parents in their own home environment, or when the teachers felt that they needed to see children's home environment. At a fourth kindergarten, home-visiting occurred when the teachers had the time or when parents took up the teachers' initial invitation and asked for a home-visit. According to one playcentre supervisor it was against playcentre policy to visit children and families at home; although parents and supervisors tended to informally visit each other. The directors of two childcare centres thought that home-visiting would be helpful for learning more about children and families and establishing closer relationships. But the problems of staff time and the likelihood of finding a mutually convenient time with parents to home-visit meant that they viewed this as impractical. At a third childcare centre, the director said that she and her staff were uncomfortable with the idea of home-visiting and had no wish to carry out home-visits.

### *Children's physical needs are met*

At one kindergarten children's physical needs were met, except children were observed drinking water from the water-play trough. Fresh water or a drink of some kind could have been made accessible to children at this and other kindergartens. At two kindergartens and one playcentre, children brought their own snacks and could eat when they wanted (provided they sat at a table); the nutritious value of children's own snacks could be questioned as could whether every child had something to eat and enough to eat. At two kindergartens the inside temperature was cold enough for children, staff, and observers to 'keep their jumpers on'. At one of these kindergartens it was warmer outside than it was inside. At the second kindergarten, the cool temperature seemed to keep children from sitting at activities and most engaged in more physical activities. At one childcare centre some children (in the toddlers room and in the over-three-year-olds room) did not have access to toilet facilities without asking a staff member or being lifted over a barrier into the toilet area.

### *Excessive punishment is not used*

At all centres, staff used only positive methods of behaviour management, such as time-out, praise for good behaviour, and redirection. At one kindergarten, though, time-out tended to be the main form of behaviour management. More positive reinforcement of good behaviour and listening to children by staff would have reduced the possibility of over-reliance on removing children from their peers and play activities. One playcentre had a child with a behaviour problem who seemed to receive adult attention mainly by misbehaving. The technique of redirection and remaining with this child for a short while whenever she misbehaved possibly reinforced her negative behaviour and provided an inappropriate model to other children of how to gain adult attention. At a childcare centre, one method of behaviour management was relied upon which did not always seem to be appropriate to every child and situation: the staff talked through a behaviour problem with children concerned. For some children spending individual time explaining why they should not behave in a certain way only reinforced their grizzling or negative behaviours in instances when they were seeking adult or peer attention.

### *Pleasant atmosphere*

There was generally a warm pleasant atmosphere at all centres. Parents comments suggested that at two centres, a kindergarten and a playcentre, the atmosphere was very calm, warm and welcoming. At three centres the atmosphere could have been more pleasant. On the day of observation at a childcare centre there was quite a bit of grizzling and crying amongst the children. At a second childcare not much grizzling or crying was observed but neither were there many sounds of laughter or happy noises. There was sometimes a frantic atmosphere at one playcentre in the way children and adults moved around when activities were being organized because of the cramped indoor area.

### *Clear pathways between activity areas*

At all centres, except for one playcentre, there were clear pathways for children and adults to move between activities and areas. At the playcentre, because of the cramped indoor conditions, movement between activities was often restricted by equipment, materials, or people being in the way.

### *Toys and equipment safe and maintained*

Staff had a high level of awareness about assuring the safety of equipment and toys, for example at a kindergarten a teacher was observed carefully checking and removing protruding nails from cable reels in the children's junk area. At one childcare centre there were a number of safety problems, such as a free-standing shelf that could fall on a child if it was climbed on and the safety of outside concrete ground around areas where children climbed and toddlers crawled/walked. At one playcentre, climbing outdoor equipment was not stable/fixed and a number of minor accidents were observed due to this, but otherwise the play environment appeared a safe.

### *Supervision*

There were problems with child supervision at one of each type of centre. The large physical size of a kindergarten meant that more staff were needed to ensure that all areas were supervised, even though this kindergarten had three teachers. The inside area was sometimes left unsupervised when a teacher was called outside. A large cloak and toilet room at one side of the main playroom could not be supervised unless a teacher was actually in there. The outdoor playground was very large and had many separate areas not easily supervised by only one or two teachers. At a childcare centre, a number of instances were observed where a child being attended to in one room (usually the bathroom or the kitchen) was temporarily left alone while a staff member checked on children or talked with staff in another room. Supervision arrangements in the childcare centre's outdoor area were not always ideal, with one staff member often supervising up to fourteen children, including toddlers and at least one or more infants in prams. At a playcentre the parents and supervisors were usually careful to ensure that an adult was positioned in areas where children played. However, parent-helpers sometimes gathered inside without realizing that no adults were with the children who were outside.

### *Clean building, facilities, toys*

There was a high standard of cleanliness in the physical environments of the centres. Two centres, however, had some hygiene problems. At a kindergarten, children could take their snacks to a table at any time they wished during session. The table was not cleaned until the end of session, and the surrounding floor and chairs sometimes became sticky or grubby. At a childcare centre, toys were often mouthed by toddlers and put away by staff at the end of each the day. The mouthed toys were cleaned spasmodically when the staff felt that they needed to be cleaned, rather than a regular daily or weekly basis.

### *Personal hygiene rules taught*

The extent to which personal hygiene was taught and emphasised to children at one childcare centre was commendable (e.g. individual toothbrushes provided and used, individual flannels, children washed their own hands using soap and water under supervision, etc). A kindergarten also fully met this criterion but not to the same extent as the childcare centre. At five centres, staff were not observed talking with children about personal hygiene behaviours and standards. At a playcentre, the bathroom hand-towels had become dirty and unhygienic during the session. One kindergarten had no form of drying facility or towels available for children to dry their hands after going to the toilet (on the day of observation). At three kindergartens, teachers asked children to wash their hands before eating, but did not supervise the morning session older children's hand-washing nor check whether children had. At one childcare centre, staff washed children's hands for them before meal and snack times. Staff could have stood back from the basins and talked with children about hand-washing whilst allowing children to learn and practice washing their own hands.

### *Staff model good health and hygiene*

Three centres fully met this criterion. A good example of staff consciousness about modelling good health habits included the researcher when she gave teachers some home-made biscuits for morning-tea at a kindergarten. One teacher explained to her that they had better not let the children see them eating the biscuits because children had been told to bring healthy foods such as apples and yoghurts for morning tea. Ways that staff at other centres did not fully met this criteria included: not washing their hands after changing nappies or assisting children to blow their noses, not washing hands before serving or assisting children with their food, and eating and having hot drinks in the children's areas whilst working with children. In addition, teachers at three kindergartens mentioned that they often felt obliged to go to work when they felt unwell, had a cold, or a temperature. However, by doing this they could pass infections on to children.

### *Provision for sick children*

Only two centres, a playcentre and a kindergarten, had an explicit policy on child sickness that was made known to parents. The childcare centres did not have adequate facilities to care for children who became sick during the day. The director of one centre, for example, said that they would use the staff room. A second childcare director said that they had a fold-up stretcher they could bring out when necessary. Two kindergartens did not have a quiet comfortable area where a sick child could be placed, separated from other children, and easily supervised.

### *Notification of infections/diseases*

Most centres notified parents through newsletters, notices, or telephones calls, if any children had an infection or disease that could be passed on to others. In most cases staff also advised parents or asked the public health nurse to explain what to do if their child, for example, got head lice. At one playcentre and two kindergartens, there were no formal systems or methods to inform all parents; parents learnt only through word-of-mouth. At one of these kindergartens only the parents' of children who were noticed to have an infection or disease were told.

### *Written programme schedule*

Centres varied in the extent to which they met this criterion. Only one kindergarten had a written programme schedule that fully met all aspects of this criteria. It listed activities and planned daily variations on these. It showed what the routines were and the approximate times these occurred. It was displayed in a conspicuous place where parents, visitors and staff could easily refer to it.

### *Stimulating/interesting play activities*

All centres had stimulating interesting toys, equipment, and materials for the children to use. At one childcare centre, though, most manipulative activities, books, and soft toys were on shelves. Staff left it up to the children to help themselves. Few activities were ever set up or changed daily to attract their attention and stimulate their interest. The younger children had many attractive activities available but the range of activities suited for children over three years of age was narrow. At a second childcare there were many interesting activities, however, little daily variation was provided because of a lack of resources. The centre, for example, had only enough books to fill the book shelf and not to allow the books available to children to be alternated.

### Programme based on child and family needs

At one childcare centre the director and staff put in considerable effort to find out about child and family needs (for example, they introduced home reports for parents to complete daily, staff carried out regular formal observation of child behaviour, and staff meetings included discussion of individual children and how best to meet their needs). The programmes of one kindergarten and one playcentre were also closely based on an understanding of child and family needs through formal child observation and communication with parents about observations. The other six centres varied as to how well they fulfilled this criterion. The onus was on parents to tell staff about their needs as these were usually not discussed unless parents raised them. A problem that impeded communication between parents and staff at kindergartens was the routine of mat-time at the end of most sessions. Parents waited together until their children were given permission to leave and go with them, making an impossible situation for parents and teachers to talk much on a one-to-one basis about child and family needs.

### Sufficient toys, equipment, resources

At all but two centres there seemed to be sufficient toys, equipment, and resources for children's use. Two childcare centre directors mentioned that they could not have the equipment and activity materials they wished for because of lack of money, and not having personal control over how money was spent. Observation supported their comments about insufficient equipment and resources at their centres.

### Developmentally appropriate activities

Activities were age appropriate at eight of the nine centres, and seemed to be individually appropriate at six centres. At the centres that did not fully meet this criterion, some children were observed to often be engaged in activities that were too simple for their age and appeared not to be of any challenge. In addition, at one of these centres three to five year olds did much aimless wandering and when they did start an activity they seemed to rarely stay at it for a sustained period of time. Active guidance and encouragement of children into activities that were appropriate for the individual child was not happening.

### Balance of child and staff initiated activities

There was not a balance of some child and staff initiated activities at two childcare centres, but at all other centres this was observed. At the two childcare centres some staff directed activities were observed (for example, music and story-book reading), but when these were not provided the children mostly engaged in social and rough-n-tumble play. More structured materials and activities could have been provided for children to self-select and self-direct. Staff could have been more pro-active by introducing individual or small groups of children to specific activities.

### Balance of some indoor and outdoor activities

Two playcentres and two kindergartens provided indoor and outdoor activities to children all of the time. One kindergarten, for example, often had typically inside activities such as books and tea-party equipment incorporated into outside activity areas to stimulate play and encourage participation. One playcentre, for example, had a large sheltered veranda that was used on wet days for outside activities such as woodwork. At five centres there tended to be little, if any, interchange of indoor and outdoor activities. Furthermore, children did not have access to typically outdoor type activities when the weather was bad. It should be noted that at one kindergarten the teachers had tried to introduce indoor activities such as easel painting and puzzles into the outdoor activity areas to encourage boys participation. This was not found to work so they now keep all children inside for the first half hour of each session to ensure they sample some indoor type activities before going outside.

### Activities for different group sizes

One childcare centre provided at least two large group activities daily and all older children (above about three years) were usually required to join in. The environment was not designed to foster small group activity (e.g. there were no divisions of floor space in the two playrooms for different activities). Children mostly engaged in individual play or short interactions with other children and adults. At the other eight centres activities were provided that allowed for children to be on their own or to be with a large number of other children. Most activities at these other centres, though, fostered small group play.

### *Participation of special needs children*

All staff who were interviewed mentioned that in their charter it had been stated that they would accept children with special needs and make any necessary modifications to the building and facilities. Few centres, though, had special needs children. At one playcentre a special needs child was not observed to have her access to activities assured. A parent had made a special book to read to her, but she usually sat during session on a bean bag watching others rather than participating.

### *Cultural awareness promoted*

Cultural awareness was promoted very well in one kindergarten programme. The family play area had a Chinese wok and dolls with different skin and hair colour. The children's books contained a variety of stories about life in other cultures. Parents from other cultures were often invited to share aspects of their culture with the children. At the entrance to the kindergarten a notice welcoming children and parents in a number of different languages was displayed. Cultural awareness could have been promoted more in the other eight centres though the range of play materials available, multi-racial toys, books, wall posters, dolls with different skin colours, and staff-child discussions. At two childcare centres and one kindergarten there was no evidence of promotion of cultural awareness. At one kindergarten the only attempt made was to occasionally invite parents from other cultures to talk with the children.

### *Biculturalism promoted*

No programmes could be described as bicultural, however, some programmes had a larger Maori "component" than others. At one playcentre, for example, the supervisor said good-bye to children in Maori. Maori words were stuck around the walls and furniture as labels and there were a few books about Maori culture and people. At one childcare centre, staff attempts to incorporate Maori language and culture were commendable. This was helped by a fluent Maori speaker on the staff who played the guitar and sung Maori songs and took Maori activities with the children. The staff attempted to incorporate Maori values into the programme as much as possible. The researcher experienced this when she was invited to stay for lunch; that is, food was shared with visitors. The Maori component of two childcare centres only involved the teaching of some Maori songs and a few Maori words to the children at one centre, and some Maori posters on the walls at the other. The teaching and recitation of songs and words could have been extended into activities to increase children's awareness and knowledge of Maori culture and customs. The posters depicting Maori words and culture could have been discussed by staff in their interactions with children.

### *Family values and customs supported*

Usually parents had to make the effort to tell staff about their family values (i.e. religious, cultural and social). Where these were known to staff they were usually respected. For example, at one kindergarten a mother who was a Jehovah Witness did not want her daughter to join in on the celebrations of other children's birthdays. This was respected by staff and the girl was given other activities to do during birthday parties. Staff at three centres may have done more to indicate to parents from other cultures that they were welcome and that the programme would support their cultural needs. An interview with a kindergarten parent from a recently immigrated family revealed that she wanted her twins to hear and experience only the English language. This raises the question of whether at the parent's request assimilation and not showing recognition of children's native language and culture is best. To support family values and customs some parent education by staff may be necessary.

### *Non-sexist behaviour, language and practices,*

There seemed to be a high level of awareness amongst the staff interviewed about sexism, strategies for encouraging androgynous behaviour and non-sexist attitudes amongst children. At three centres, examples of not meeting this criteria were observed. The balance of books and puzzles showing people in non-traditional sex-stereotyped roles at two childcare centres was questionable. In addition, staff at one childcare centre were observed only in caring and domestic roles and there seemed to be a clear division between boys and girls in their activities. For example, few girls and mainly boys were observed on the climbing equipment and few boys and mainly girls were observed doing puzzles and playing with the dough. Some kindergarten boys were observed making a number of sexist comments in the playground, for example: "go away, only boys allowed here" and "we're strong, you not". This occurred throughout the morning observed and could have been addressed by the teachers.

### *Staff play with children*

Staff at most centres did not just supervise children's activity they also joined in and either acted as "big kids" helping with the dough baking for example, or they extended children's play through introducing new ideas and discussion. Two kindergartens and one childcare centre did not fully met this criterion because staff involved themselves little in children's activities and had mainly supervisory and caretaking roles. The criteria was not fully met at another childcare centre because staff engaged in a lot of cuddling and "fooling" around with children. They were only involved in children's play when they had initiated it or were directing it.

### *Regular outings and excursions*

Children were taken on regular local outings at least once a fortnight and on two or more major excursions a year at four centres. At one kindergarten, children were not taken to the shops or local areas because according to the teachers places they could visit were too far away for them to walk. An excursion, using cars or buses for transport, usually happened about once a term but only for the older children who attended morning session. At another two kindergartens and one playcentre there were often short outings but only older children were taken on excursions and the younger ones missed out.

### *Programme evaluation*

This criteria was met at six centres in various ways (e.g. monthly reporting about playcentre activities and happenings to Parent Council and feedback from parents, and a childcare director carried out staff performance evaluations). One childcare centre and two kindergartens did not fully meet this criteria because programme evaluation only took the form of informal discussions amongst staff and no forms of written or regular assessments and re-evaluations were made.

### *Qualified staff*

Only the kindergartens had an all qualified staff. Each of the childcare centres had some unqualified staff at the time of observation: 33 percent (n = 3), 27 percent (n = 3) and 50 percent (n = 3) at each centre. One childcare director said that she would like to have an all qualified staff but there was a shortage of qualified people prepared to work in childcare. She had received only three replies from a job advertisement in the local newspaper and of the three applicants only one was qualified. At the playcentres, parents were rostered on as staff with their one qualified supervisor. Playcentres were difficult to rate on this criteria because according to their philosophy parents are teachers and therefore "qualified". However, the distinction here was made between formal qualifications and training experience.

### *Staff have parenthood experience*

All playcentre supervisors and teachers at one kindergarten were parents. The playcentre supervisors all had, or still had, their own child(ren) attending the playcentre they worked at. Not all staff at the other six centres were parents, including one childcare centre that had no parents amongst its staff.

### *Staff are warm and caring people*

Staff at all centres were most definitely observed to have warm caring personalities. Comments from parents confirmed this. Parents interviewed at one kindergarten made some negative comments about the personal attitudes of one of their teachers. Observation of her interactions with children also suggested that she tended to be "stand-offish" towards some and had "favourites" who received more attention from her than others.

### *Good staff leadership*

This criterion was met at eight centres. The director of a childcare, which did not fully meet the criterion, was available to her staff and demonstrated acceptance of her overall responsibility and accountability but she provided little positive feedback to staff. Not all her staff were aware of, and understood, the different policies, procedures, and philosophies of the centre. She did not ensure that her staff learned and knew these from the time they commenced employment.

### *Refresher training*

Three centres had policies which supported and encouraged staff participation in in-service training courses through funding incentives and paid leave. Another five centres had staff who were currently participating in or had recently completed some form of refresher training, however, no records of this were kept for the purpose of planning staff ongoing professional development. At one childcare centre staff attendance at refresher courses was not supported, there was no policy on this, and there was no planning and provision for staff development opportunities.

### *Stability in staffing*

The staff at three centres had not changed in the last year and could therefore be described as having a very stable staff. At one kindergarten both teachers were in relieving positions, although the relieving head teacher had previously held the teacher's position. Two other kindergartens had a teacher in a short-term relieving capacity. At one playcentre one of two supervisors had recently been appointed. Because supervisors positions were reviewed each year their jobs could not be regarded as permanent. At the playcentres, different parents were rostered to work each session which meant that there was less daily continuity of staffing than at the kindergartens and childcare centres.

### *Professionalism considered important*

At all centres the staff interviewed demonstrated that they valued the importance of their work and believed in communicating this to parents and others. A high level of professionalism was evidenced at five centres, including staff membership of representative organizations, the availability of professional journals and books, and frequent peer feedback on work performance. Professional literature at one playcentre was lacking and the few books that were available were old. Two kindergartens and one childcare centre had no professional books and current journals, and staff did not comment on each others work..

### *Staff needs provided for in environment*

Four of the nine centres did not provide very well for staff. Two kindergartens had a staff room but this was also used at the end of sessions for mat-times and to withdraw children or to talk with parents. It was, therefore, not a private space for the teachers. Two playcentres had kitchens that were used as staff rooms but these were accessible to children and parents. One of these playcentres and a kindergarten had no secure cupboard space for staff to leave their belongings. The basin taps in the staff bathroom at another kindergarten were not working.

### *Group size*

Two kindergartens had large group sizes of between 30 to 40 children each session. Two childcare centres had a large group size because at times they had over 25 children in attendance including infants and toddlers. A third childcare centre also had a large group size but the children were divided into "rooms" according to age, and thus there were smaller groups within the whole group.

### *Staff-child ratio*

The playcentres and childcare centres had high ratios of staff or adults to children (between 1:3 to 1:6 for children over two years). The kindergartens had ratios of two staff to thirty children, or three staff to forty children. Kindergarten's were making use of parent assistance to improve ratios. At one kindergarten one parent from each family was even required to assist at least once a term or to find someone to take their place. However unlike the playcentres, parents at the kindergartens were not viewed as staff but as adult assistants.

### *Parents and families welcomed*

Most parents who were interviewed felt that their centre and staff were welcoming of them and other family members. Three of the five parents interviewed at one kindergarten said that they did not feel comfortable and accepted. At a second kindergarten, two parents with younger children not enroled commented that they felt excluded from helping and going on excursions because parents were discouraged from bringing younger siblings with them. Parents at a childcare centre were not usually invited to participate in centre activities, outings and excursions.

### *Community members involved*

All centres had at least some involvement by people in the community (e.g. from men on periodic detention who were helping to remodel a childcare centre's playground to high school children on work experience). Three centres, though, had minimal involvement of community members. People representing different organizations and occupations were not invited to meet and talk with children at these three centres.

### *Outside professionals known and liaised with when necessary*

A list of local agencies and health and social service professionals that could be called upon was not kept by one playcentre and one kindergarten. The supervisor and head teacher said that they had never had to call upon outside professionals for assistance. Other centres had a list of relevant contacts and called upon outside professionals for assistance, advice or support from time to time.

### *Parents informed of philosophy/practices*

Parents at all centres were given at least some information about centre policies at the time of enrollment and kept up-to-date about specific activities through methods such as newsletters and notices. All but two centres, a kindergarten and a childcare centre, had a copy of their draft charter displayed for parents to read. No other literature about programme philosophy and general practices was available for parents at these two centres.

### *Parent education*

At least some opportunities for parents to learn about child-rearing and parenting were provided by eight of the nine centres. Four centres fully met the criterion, providing different kinds of opportunities such as parent discussion evenings and seminars, workshops, guest speakers, a parent library, information displayed on the noticeboard and use of newsletters. At one kindergarten no form of parent education was provided. The head teacher explained that parents did not seem to be interested and their attendance at evening meetings could not be assured if they organized something.

### *Parent-staff partnership*

Parent and staff interviews revealed that staff respected parents role, and parents felt that staff roles complimented and supported them in their efforts. Parents at four centres felt that if there was a problem relating to their child they could discuss it with a staff member but otherwise there was little sharing of information. At one kindergarten in particular, the parents interviewed spoke about learning more from their children than from the staff about what was going on in the kindergarten, their children's experiences, and how their children were feeling.

### *Parent involvement in decision-making*

At seven centres, parents could participate in decision-making through being on the committee or going to Parent Council meetings. Two kindergartens informed all parents when a meeting was to be held so that they could attend as observers. Staff at the seven centres made known to parents that they welcomed their ideas and suggestions for activities. The playcentres met this criteria to a high level because all parents were members of their centre's Parents Council and most had responsibilities of some kind. At one childcare centre, there was an openness and keenness for parents input and involvement in decision-making but no formal or structured opportunities existed (apart from meetings for charter consultation). At a second childcare centre parents were not involved in formal or informal decision-making processes (apart from a parents committee formed for charter consultation, but their feedback had little impact on the charter prepared).

### *Friendship and support for parents*

There was much evidence of childcare staff support of parents and friendly relationships. For example, staff welcomed and accepted parents who wanted to talk about their problems. On occasions staff had taken children home with them or kept the centre open when parents needed extended hours. At two playcentres and two kindergartens the criterion was also met. At the playcentres a number of personal friendships between staff and parents had developed. Teachers at another two kindergartens did not regard this to be their role, although the head teachers mentioned that they were available two afternoons a week if parents wanted to make an appointment to talk with them.

### *Reports about children's activities and progress*

Reporting to parents about children's activities and progress was done at two childcare centres and one playcentre, for example: verbal discussions with individual parents when they collected their child, the daily activities of each child recorded for parents to check, notes sent home with children, and times set aside to talk with parents about their children. At the other centres verbal and written systems for sharing information about children's day, their activities, physical well-being, and progress were either not established or had much scope for improvement.

### *Provisions for parents in the centre environment*

Provisions for parents were good at one playcentre (e.g. comfortable adult-sized seats to sit on, access to tea and coffee making facilities, an adult's bathroom, and no problem with parking outside the centre). At the other centres, there were no places available to parents where they could rest, wait or meet each other, comfy chairs were not always available, and at some (city) centres parking was a problem.

## *3.6.2 Summary of centre quality levels on the QRC criteria*

The data discussed in Section 3.6.1 is graphically represented in Figures 1 to 5 below. These show variations in centre quality levels on the different criteria associated with ensuring children's happiness, safety health and hygiene, a good-quality programme, quality staffing, and parent/family and community involvement.

Across the five QRC categories nine centres were rated as fully meeting five criteria:

- maintaining a stable peer group,
- encouraging parent contact,
- having a staff who were experienced,
- having a staff who worked together as a team, and
- holding staff meetings (of some kind) to decide about activities and the programme.

In addition to these five criteria seven to eight of the nine centres were rated a "4" on the criteria of:

- staff showing children that they care about them,
- having a sensitive settling-in process,
- ensuring clear pathways between activity areas,
- providing a safe environment,
- providing a clean environment,
- providing stimulating activities,
- having sufficient provisions for children's play,
- ensuring a balance of child and staff initiated activities,
- providing activities for different sized groups of children,
- being able to cater for special needs children,
- having a staff who were warm and caring people
- having a head staff member who provided good leadership,
- making use of outside professionals,
- informing parents about programme philosophies and practices,
- enabling parent involvement in decision-making processes, and
- providing parents with support and friendship.

Five or more centres were rated as very low in quality on three criteria:

- home-visiting practices,
- promoting biculturalism, and
- having a written programme schedule.

Figure 1. How well centres were meeting criteria for ensuring children's happiness.

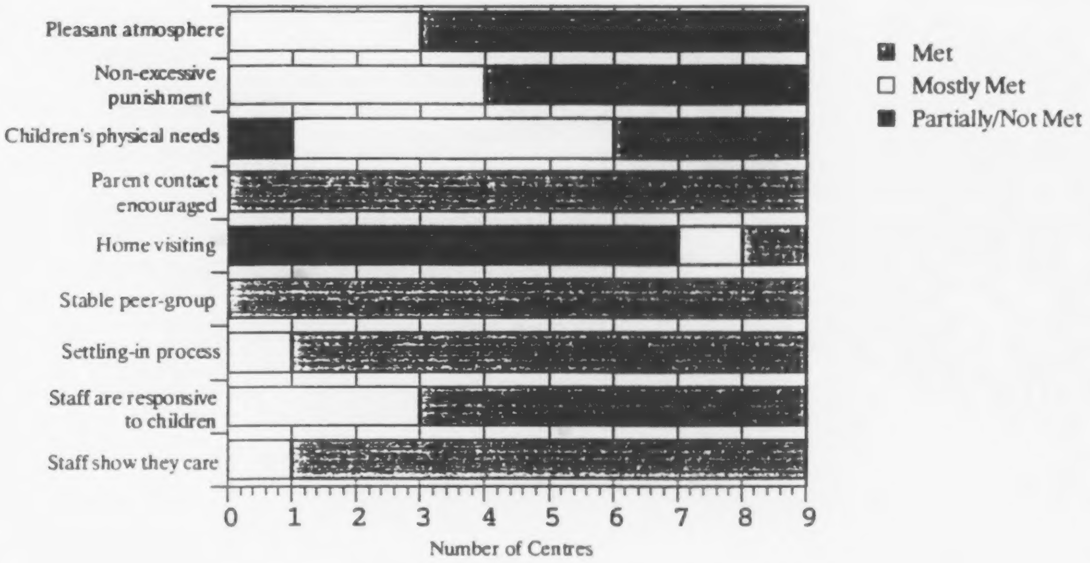


Figure 2. How well centres were meeting safety, health and hygiene criteria.

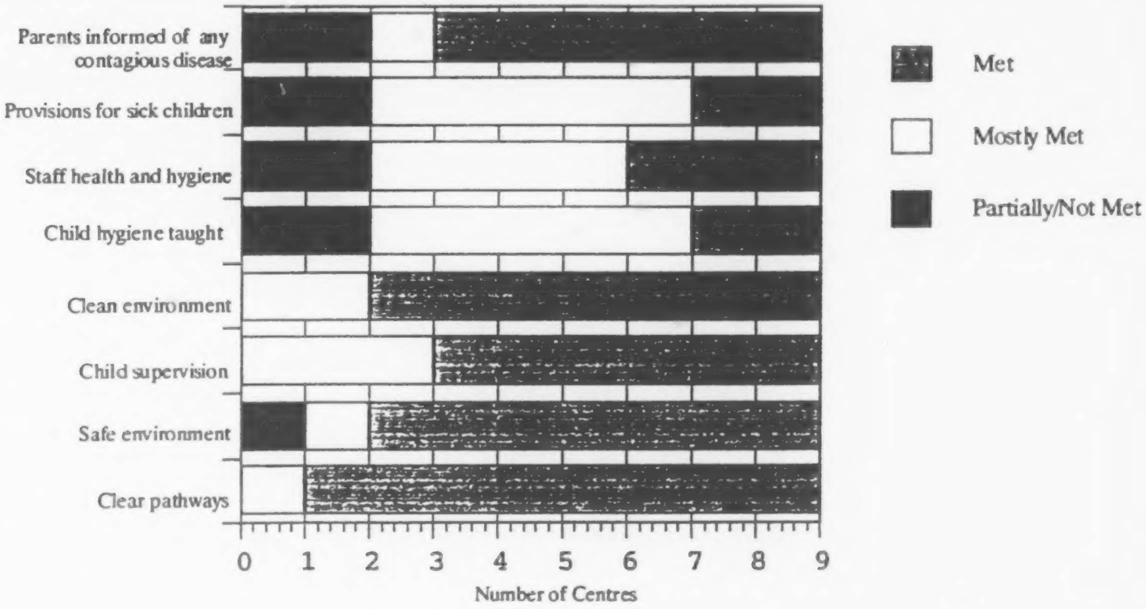


Figure 3. How well centres were meeting programme criteria.

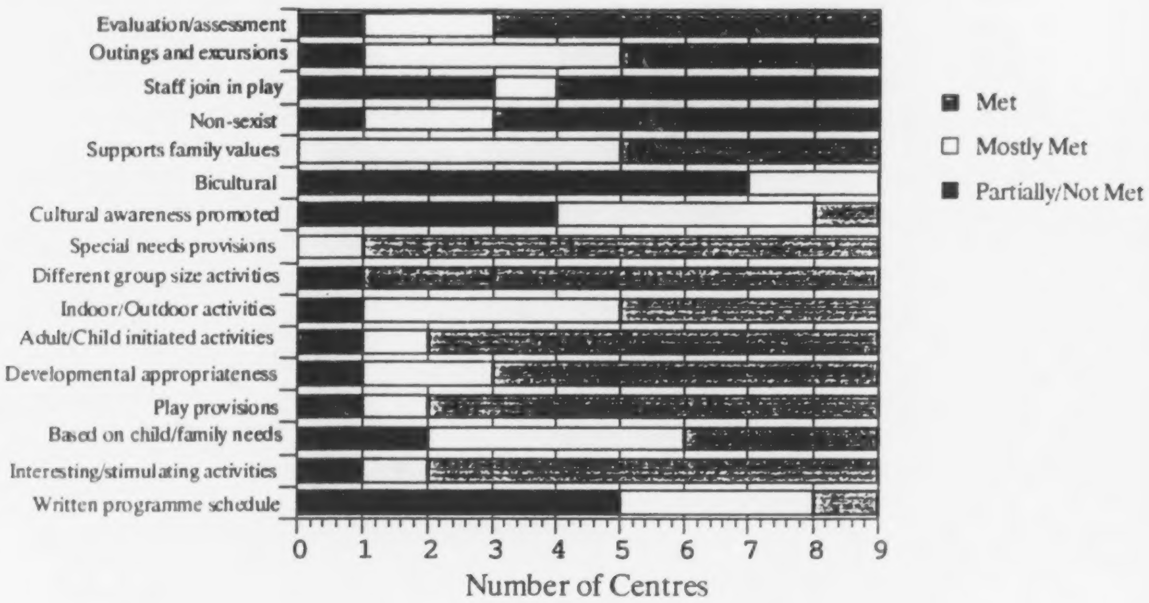


Figure 4. How well centres were meeting staffing criteria.

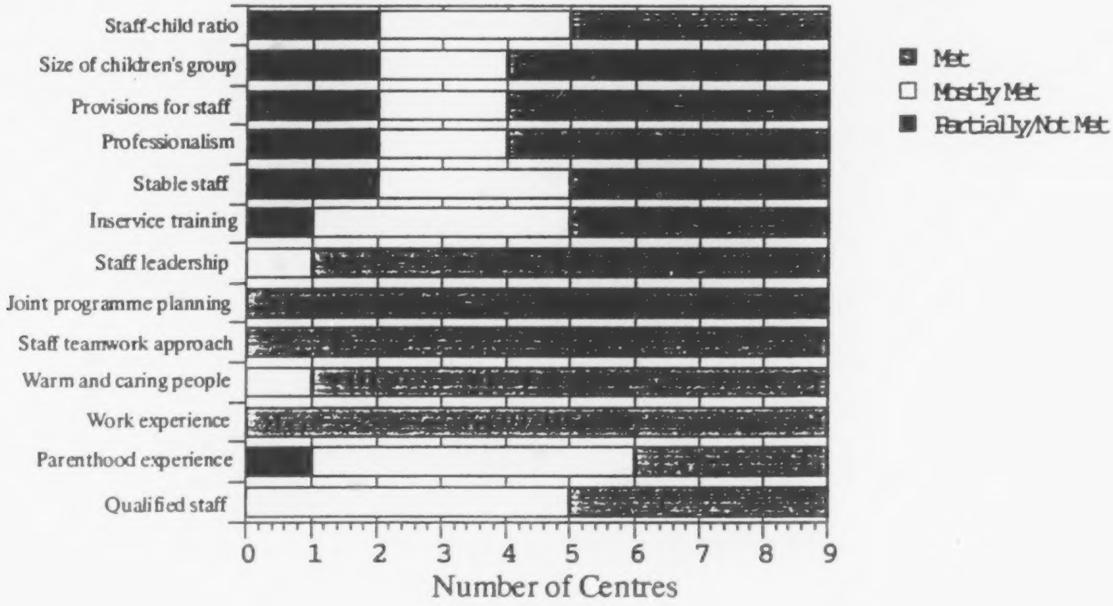
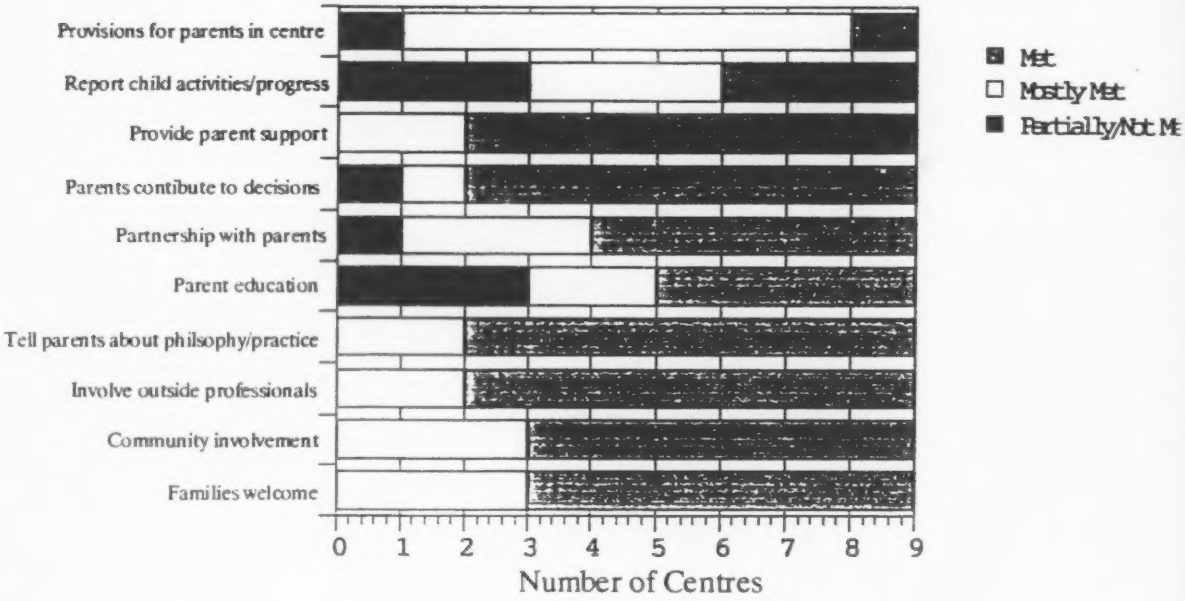


Figure 5. How well centres were meeting parent, family and community involvement criteria.



### *3.6.3 Comparison of staff and researcher assessments*

Eight of nine kindergarten, playcentre, and childcare head staff members rated their centre's quality on the QRC.(3)

The sum of QRC centre rating scores across the eight centres was 1546 for observation ratings (X = 3.49, Std. Dev. 0.77) and 1580 for staff ratings (X = 3.55, Std. Dev. 0.71). The actual difference between the observers and staff total mean QRC scores is small (34 points). There was no consistent trend in any one direction of individual staff or researcher ratings being higher or lower than the other. Staff evaluations therefore do not seem to have been influenced much (if at all) by their personal interest in their centre. Given a quality review instrument and a request to implement it, head staff members can objectively assess their centre, including their own effectiveness as early childhood staff. It seems that the QRC instrument enabled the observers to examine the every-day experiences and subtleties of centre organization which were intimately known by staff as recorded in their evaluations.

Only on four QRC items were statistically significant differences between observation and staff own ratings of centre quality found. The statistics are shown in Table 13 and the differences discussed below.

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(3) The researcher met with each head staff member to compare and discuss observation ratings with centre ratings (see Section 2.5.4).

**TABLE 13.**

***QRC Items For Which the Differences Between Researcher Mean Observation Ratings and Staff Mean Ratings were Statistically Significant.***

| Criteria | Researcher | Staff | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean (S.D.) | Mean (S.D.) | p |
| Meeting children's physical needs | 3.13 (0.64) | 3.88 (0.35) | 0.02 |
| Personal hygiene taught | 2.75 (1.17) | 3.75 (0.46) | 0.05 |
| Balance of indoor/outdoor activities | 3.50 (0.54) | 4.00 (0.00) | 0.03 |
| Good staff leadership | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.50 (0.53) | 0.03 |

Provisions for meeting children's physical needs were observed to be one or two rating points lower in quality at six centres than staff ratings indicated. Discussions with head staff members revealed that they tended to rate their ability to meet children's physical needs higher because they assumed that they were fully meeting the criterion. It therefore seems that either the observers had been too'picky' in awarding a rating to these centres, or the staff were not fully aware of ways that they were not meeting criterion.

Teaching children good personal hygiene was perceived to be met to a higher level by staff at five centres than was observed. This difference seemed to be mainly because staff focussed on one or two key practices and awarded a rating of quality without examining what else was and was not happening. For example, one childcare director rated her centre a "4" because her staff praised children and rewarded them with stamps on their hands when they showed that they had learnt a particular hygiene behaviour. She did not consider ways that staff were not reinforcing children's development of personal hygiene practices, such as washing their hands for them rather than letting them do this for themselves.

All staff rated their centres a "4" for provisions for indoor and outdoor activities but the observers rating was "3" for four centres. It seemed that the observers were harder on centres than the staff in making their ratings. Staff tended to make their rating on the basis of the presence of indoor and outdoor activities, whereas the observers ratings also reflected the physical availability of indoor and outdoor activities to children (e.g. outdoor- type activities taken inside on days when the weather was bad and children were kept inside).

The observers rating of the quality of staff leadership was higher than head staff ratings of themselves at three centres. Discussions with staff at the three centres suggested modesty and a reflexive approach to their work in the sense that they were constantly thinking about ways that they could be more effective.

Feedback from staff suggested three main benefits of their involvement in assessing their centre on the QRC. First, the QRC instrument gave them ideas for improving the quality of their practices and centre environment. One playcentre supervisor, for example, said:

> *"I had never thought that having a special area set aside for a sick child was important. But perhaps it is".*

and, another playcentre supervisor said during a telephone conversation:

> *"There were a few things I picked up immediately on: I need to get some 'easy-to-use' disinfectant and cloths for washing the changing tables and other surfaces. I need to subscribe to a professional journal. I need to put up a written journal. So I'd like to tell you that in that respect it was very useful - that these things came up immediately".*

Second, staff recognized ways that the different components of centre quality were inter-related and indivisible. One kindergarten teacher, for example, made the following comment when discussing her rating of the staff-child ratio quality criterion with the researcher:

> *"Things that are frustrating are the ratio. If we had more teachers we would be able to have more small group activities. If we had more teachers we would have more time to talk to the parents. But with 20 parents each to cope with each session we can't encourage them to talk with us, and its better for them to come at a time when the children are not about".*

At one childcare centre, participation in the exercise was useful in a third way. The director informed the researcher that she and her staff were going to continue to assess their centre's quality in this way and had already compiled a shorter checklist from the QRC instrument:

> *"We asterisked some criteria that we weren't or weren't achieving well enough on and later went back through the checklist and made a separate list of these to evaluate ourselves again in the future".*

The areas they viewed important for self-improvement were:

- encouraging parent contact,
- ensuring the safety of toys and equipment,
- ensuring good supervision of children's areas,
- developing a better procedure for cleaning the nappy changing area after each use,
- ensuring programme aims were based on an understanding and knowledge of child and family needs,
- promoting cultural awareness in the programme,
- working towards a bicultural programme, and
- formalizing and documenting centre procedures to orient new staff to the programme.

For staff the process generally proved to be:

> *"not as bad as we first thought" (kindergarten head teacher).*

One major problem with the QRC was with its length (some 20 A4 pages or 10 pages reduced to 65% of original size). It was not possible to get around this problem because it was relevant to the objectives of the study to assess the quality centre practice according to the criteria which people had been asked to rate the importance of.

## 3.7 *Congruency between actual centre quality and parent and staff beliefs about what is important*

To test statistically for how closely the quality of practices at the nine centres (on criteria assessed using the QRC) related to parent and staff ratings of importance, observation data was correlated first with parent importance scores and then with staff importance scores for the different criteria. Table 14 shows the mean scores and standard deviations for centre observation ratings, parent and staff mean importance scores and correlation coefficients.

TABLE 14

***Correlations between Observation Ratings of the Quality of Nine Centres and Parent and Staff Mean Importance Scores of the Quality Criteria Observed.***

| **Quality Criteria** | **Researcher** | **Parent** | **Staff** | **Parent** | **Staff** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Observation** | **Importance** | **Importance** | | |
| **Children's Happiness** | Mean (S.D) | Mean (S.D) | Mean (S.D) | r | r |
| Staff show children they care | 3.89 (0.33) | 3.87 (0.34) | 3.90 (0.31) | .80 * | -.14 |
| Staff are responsive to children | 3.67 (0.50) | 3.95 (0.23) | 4.00 (0.00) | - | .19 |
| Sensitive settling-in process | 3.89 (0.33) | 3.72 (0.58) | 3.93 (0.25) | .92 * | -.14 |
| Peer group stability | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.17 (0.81) | 3.80 (0.41) | - | - |
| Staff home-visit families | 1.78 (1.09) | 1.89 (0.96) | 2.24 (0.95) | .85 * | .78 * |
| Parent contact encouraged | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.51 (0.62) | 3.93 (0.25) | - | - |
| Children's physical needs are met | 3.22 (0.67) | 3.66 (0.57) | 3.86 (0.44) | .52 | -.42 |
| Excessive punishment is not used | 3.56 (0.53) | 3.74 (0.64) | 3.67 (0.92) | -.31 | .31 |
| Home like pleasant atmosphere | 3.72 (0.25) | 3.79 (0.43) | 3.97 (0.18) | -.07 | 1.00 * |
| **Safety, Health and Hygiene** | | | | | |
| Clear pathways between areas | 3.89 (0.33) | 3.30 (0.70) | 3.80 (0.41) | .12 | .45 |
| Toys/equipment safe/maintained | 3.67 (0.71) | 3.83 (0.40) | 3.97 (0.18) | .55 | .35 |
| Children supervised at all times | 3.67 (0.50) | 3.86 (0.36) | 3.97 (0.18) | -.09 | .50 |
| Clean building, facilities, toys | 3.78 (0.44) | 3.80 (0.43) | 3.87 (0.35) | -.28 | -.26 |
| Personal hygiene rules taught | 2.78 (1.09) | 3.74 (0.49) | 3.93 (0.25) | -.23 | -.08 |
| Staff model good health/hygiene | 3.11 (0.78) | 3.73 (0.51) | 3.89 (0.32) | -.73 * | -.42 |
| Provision for sick children | 2.89 (0.93) | 3.28 (0.82) | 3.69 (0.60) | .02 | .32 |
| Notification of infections | 3.33 (1.12) | 3.54 (0.67) | 3.55 (0.74) | .43 | .87 * |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Programme** | | | | | |
| Written programme schedule | 2.33 (1.00) | 2.54 (1.02) | 3.07 (1.03) | .78 * | .39 |
| Stimulating, interesting activities | 3.67 (0.71) | 3.76 (0.46) | 3.87 (0.43) | -.17 | .01 |
| Based on child & family needs | 3.11 (0.78) | 3.11 (0.82) | 3.57 (0.73) | .53 | -.34 |
| Sufficient toys, equipment, etc | 3.67 (0.71) | 3.70 (0.48) | 3.90 (0.31) | -.11 | -.08 |
| Developmentally appropriate | 3.56 (0.73) | 3.79 (0.41) | 3.97 (0.18) | .24 | -.23 |
| Balance child/staff activities | 3.66 (0.71) | 3.55 (0.59) | 3.73 (0.52) | -.17 | -.32 |
| Balance indoor/outdoor activities | 3.33 (0.71) | 3.68 (0.53) | 3.73 (0.69) | -.22 | -.34 |
| Different sized group activities | 3.78 (0.67) | 3.63 (0.53) | 3.90 (0.31) | .32 | .15 |
| Special needs provisions | 3.89 (0.33) | 3.52 (0.79) | 3.79 (0.42) | -.68 * | -.27 |
| Cultural awareness promoted | 3.33 (1.12) | 3.07 (0.83) | 3.73 (0.79) | .02 | -.33 |
| Biculturalism promoted | 2.00 (0.71) | 3.39 (0.83) | 3.73 (0.79) | .13 | -.11 |
| Family values/customs supported | 3.44 (0.53) | 3.10 (0.88) | 3.70 (0.47) | -.12 | .35 |
| Non-sexist behaviour, language, | 3.56 (0.73) | 2.71 (0.99) | 3.69 (0.66) | -.23 | -.35 |
| Staff join children in their play | 3.22 (0.97) | 3.53 (0.72) | 3.50 (1.07) | -.10 | .16 |
| Regular outings and excursions | 3.33 (0.71) | 3.14 (0.84) | 3.73 (0.52) | .42 | .07 |
| Programme evaluations | 3.56 (0.73) | 3.51 (0.64) | 3.76 (0.58) | .34 | -.17 |
| **Staffing** | | | | | |
| Qualified staff | 3.44 (0.53) | 3.59 (0.66) | 3.57 (0.63) | .80 * | .54 |
| Staff have parenthood experience | 3.11 (0.93) | 2.37 (1.06) | 2.27 (1.14) | .86 * | .39 |
| Staff experienced with children | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.70 (0.56) | 3.70 (0.54) | - | - |
| Staff are warm and caring people | 3.89 (0.33) | 3.92 (0.29) | 3.97 (0.18) | .09 | -.13 |
| Staff work together as a team | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.85 (0.36) | 3.93 (0.25) | - | - |
| Meet for programme planning | 4.00 (0.00) | 3.68 (0.52) | 3.83 (0.46) | - | - |
| Good staff leadership | 3.89 (0.33) | 3.76 (0.49) | 3.93 (0.25) | .03 | -.13 |
| Refresher training | 3.22 (0.97) | 3.44 (0.76) | 3.60 (0.50) | .55 | .13 |
| Stability in staffing | 3.22 (0.83) | 3.38 (0.73) | 3.38 (0.78) | .51 | -.24 |
| Professionalism | 3.33 (0.87) | 3.33 (0.86) | 3.63 (0.63) | .10 | -.11 |
| Provisions for staff needs | 3.33 (0.87) | 3.52 (0.69) | 3.60 (0.97) | .36 | .61 |
| Group size not too big | 3.33 (0.87) | 3.78 (0.43) | 3.93 (0.25) | -.25 | .64 |
| High ratio staff to children | 3.22 (0.83) | 3.40 (0.80) | 3.83 (0.38) | .28 | -.32 |
| **Parent, Family and Community Involvement** | | | | | |
| Parents, families made welcome | 3.67 (0.50) | 3.74 (0.50) | 3.93 (0.26) | .27 | .30 |
| Community members involved | 3.67 (0.50) | 3.26 (0.77) | 3.43 (0.57) | .24 | -.32 |
| Outside professionals used | 3.78 (0.44) | 3.37 (0.74) | 3.60 (0.62) | .19 | .47 |
| Inform about philosophy, etc | 3.78 (0.44) | 3.41 (0.70) | 3.76 (0.44) | .02 | -.04 |
| Parent education | 3.00 (1.12) | 2.59 (0.98) | 3.55 (0.57) | .58 | .49 |
| Parents regarded as joint partners | 3.44 (0.72) | 3.42 (0.80) | 3.90 (0.31) | .51 | -.04 |
| Parents join in decision-making | 3.56 (1.01) | 3.42 (0.73) | 3.70 (0.54) | .63 | .23 |
| Parent friendship and support | 3.78 (0.44) | 3.42 (0.75) | 3.93 (0.25) | .61 | -.25 |
| Child progress/activity reports | 3.00 (0.87) | 3.31 (0.78) | 3.40 (0.81) | .36 | .33 |
| Provisions for parents | 3.00 (0.50) | 2.18 (1.01) | 3.30 (0.79) | .05 | .12 |

* $p < .05$ (i.e. $r > 0.66$ for sample size of nine centres)

On six criteria large and statistically significant positive correlations between mean observation ratings and parents' mean importance scores were found. For two of these criteria, staff show children that they care about them and a sensitive settling-in process, only one centre received an observation rating other than "4". Thus, the high correlation occurred because parents at that one centre gave relatively low ratings to the importance of that criteria.

Greater variations among centres were noted for the other four statistically significant criteria:

- staff home visited families,
- a written programme/schedule,
- qualified staff, and
- staff had parenthood experience.

The large correlations are likely to have come about either because parents found they liked the practice in the centres where it occurred (e.g. home-visiting, the availability of a written programme schedule), or because parents who wanted the practice chose centres which displayed it.

Large and statistically significant negative correlations between observation ratings and staff importance scores were found for three criteria:

- home-visiting,
- pleasant atmosphere, and
- parents notified of infections/diseases.

In these cases, it is likely that the practice occurred where and because staff thought these attributes were important.

Somewhat harder to understand are the statistically significant negative correlations between observation ratings and parent importance scores for two criteria:

- staff modelled good health/hygiene, and
- the environment allowed special needs children to participate.

In the latter case only one centre received an observation rating other than "4" so the correlation depends on the importance ratings from parents of that one centre. The correlation on the staff health/hygiene criterion is more worthy of note, indicating that parents tended to rate the importance of staff modelling good health/hygiene higher in centres where observed practices were weaker.

# Chapter Four

# Conclusion

## 4.1 Summary of Results

### About parents

The two main reasons why parents chose their particular centre were convenience (e.g. location, hours, cost) and because they liked what that saw when they first visited (e.g. staff were friendly, activities looked good, attractive playground). Some parents enrolled simply for the reason of availability (i.e. centre had no or a short waiting list).

Additional child care services were used by just over one quarter of the parents for:
- either further or better education for their child, and
- more hours of child care, or for child care on days which their centre was closed.

Parents from the different centres varied in how they used their time when their children attended centre. Playcentre parents mainly stayed at their playcentre. Most childcare and kohanga parents studied or worked outside-of-the-home. Most kindergarten parents stayed at home (e.g. doing housework and caring for younger siblings) or engaged in recreational activities (e.g. gym class).

All playcentre and kohanga parents were involved in some way in the running of their centre, but less than half the kindergarten and childcare parents were. Helping in the programme was the most common form of involvement amongst parents. Some kindergarten and childcare parents gave various personal reasons for not being involved. These would be relevant for staff to consider if they want to increase parent involvement at their centres.

### About staff

Most staff were working at their centre for personal and social/political reasons and few for monetary or status rewards.

Staff had responsibilities for carrying out a wide variety of tasks, and head staff had additional administrative and staffing responsibilities. Most kindergarten and playcentre staff described their roles as setting up the environment and facilitating children's learning. Many childcare staff, in addition to the same roles as kindergarten and playcentre staff, mentioned that they worked with specific groups of children and attended to their physical and health needs.

Most staff had expressed concerns about their work to parents, centre managers, or others. These concerns were mostly over employment conditions, feelings of being taken for granted, hours and wages.

### Goals

Many goals were rated as important by parents and staff, but the very most important ones for both groups were:
- ensuring a safe and secure environment,
- promoting children's self-confidence,
- providing warm loving care,
- fostering peer relationships, and
- encouraging children's independence.

Staff tended to rate educational goals and goals related to links with parents and family support as more important than what parents did. The goal of keeping children entertained was rated significantly higher in importance by parents in contrast to staff.

Goals rated as more important by staff in contrast to parents were:
- supporting children's individual learning characteristics,
- working in partnership with parents,
- providing parent education, and
- promoting cultural awareness in the programme.

The goal of parent education was more important to playcentre parents than to kindergarten and childcare parents. Parent support and friendship was also a more important goal to playcentre parents than to kindergarten parents.

Childcare parents rated the goals of providing warm loving care and opportunities to relate with adults as more important than kindergarten parents did.

Kindergarten parents rated the importance of fostering children's compliance with social expectations significantly higher than childcare parents did.

Across the centres, staff generally agreed on the relative importance of most goals for providing early education and care.

## *Definitions of a good-quality centre*

For parents, what makes a centre a good-quality one? Features and characteristics related to children's happiness (e.g. the atmosphere, social interactions, and behaviour management) and to the programme (e.g. the amount and attractiveness of toys and activities) were prominent in parents' descriptions. Organizational characteristics (e.g. staff-child ratio, trained staff) were not mentioned as often nor emphasised as much.

Staff descriptions of a good-quality centre were similar in many respects to the parents'. They differed in respect of frequent references to the quality of staffing (e.g. staff enjoy/love their job and are professionals in their approach) and they made more references to structural characteristics.

## *The importance of different criteria for a good-quality centre*

A large number of criteria were rated by parents, staff, and experts as being important and very important to the quality of an early childhood centre. The very most important criteria for all three groups were:

- staff are responsive to children,
- activities are developmentally appropriate,
- toys and equipment are safe and maintained,
- staff show children they care about them,
- staff work together as a team,
- staff are warm and caring people, and
- parents and families are made to feel welcome.

Criteria related to ensuring home-centre continuity for children and promoting links with parents and families were not rated as important by parents in contrast to the significantly higher ratings of staff and experts. Other criteria which were less important to parents and more important to staff and experts were:

- a written programme schedule,
- a developmentally appropriate programme,
- a high ratio of staff to children,
- promotion of biculturalism, and
- promotion of cultural awareness.

Some criteria related to health/hygiene, physical environment, community integration, and social-emotional climate in the centre, were not as important to experts as they were to staff, and in some cases parents also.

The actual size of the group mean importance scores suggest some differences among the groups in what they viewed as priorities for assuring the quality of an early childhood centre. For example, there were large differences between the size of the mean importance scores of the criterion of peer group stability between staff and parents-experts, with the magnitude of the staff mean rating score being greater than the other groups.

Statistically significant differences between the groups mean importance ratings of the various criteria were as follows.

Home-visiting and staff professionalism were more important to kindergarten parents than playcentre parents and, either, kohanga or childcare parents.

Biculturalism and support of family values and customs were more important to kohanga parents than the other parent groups.

Outings and excursions, peer group stability, and meeting children's physical needs were more important to childcare parents than parents at one or more of the other centres.

Kindergarten and childcare staff mean importance scores of the following criteria were significantly higher than playcentre staff:

- written programme schedule,
- balance of indoor/outdoor activities,
- programme evaluation,
- staff team-work,
- programme planning meetings,
- provisions for staff, and
- good staff leadership.

The practice of home-visiting was rated significantly higher in importance by kindergarten staff in contrast to childcare staff who rated it very low importance.

## *The special qualities of different centres*

Some similarities and differences in how representatives from the kindergartens, playcentres, and childcare centres defined the concept of quality and the features that they believed distinguished the quality of their centres were noted.

Kindergarten quality was believed to be characterised by:

- separation of age-groups into different sessions,
- trained, professional staff
- reliance on (voluntary) parent assistance, and
- a free, affordable service for parents.

The quality of childcare was believed to be:

- a diversity of philosophies among centres,
- flexibility in catering for parents' child care needs,
- fees charged to provide high staff ratios and reduce the need for parent involvement,
- staff who had different training backgrounds,
- a family atmosphere characterised by warm relationships between staff and children and between staff and parents/families.

Playcentre quality was believed to be distinguishable by its:

- interested and involved parents,
- organization as a parent-cooperative,
- group supervision in some centres as an alternative to professional staff,
- emphasis on parent education, and
- emphasis on a voluntary, self-help way of operation.

## *Parents' and staff likes and dislikes about their centre*

Parents and staff all mentioned some aspect of their centre which they particularly liked. Less than half the parents expressed dissatisfactions but most staff were not pleased about something.

Features that directly effected children's emotional and physical well-being and features related to the quality of staffing received most praise from parents. Staff made more positive comments about features that effected their own happiness and job satisfaction.

Some kindergarten parents expressed concern about the low staff-child ratio at their centres. Across the centres, some staff complained about a lack of funds. One staff member complained about government influence over centres.
Parents' specific concerns were about:

- the way staff cared for children,
- parent-child separation policies and procedures,
- the adequacy of provisions for meeting children's physical needs,
- child supervision,
- the quality (e.g. size, materials) of the play environment,
- the type and range of activities,
- programme organization and scheduling,
- staff employment policies and practices,
- committee composition and functioning,
- recognition of their values and needs,
- the apathy of other parents, and
- barriers to their involvement.

Staff concerns were mainly about:

- the lack of understanding and support from others,
- staffing (including recruitment of playcentre parents to train, commitment of childcare trainees to complete training, staff educational levels, and staff union membership), and
- the adequacy/suitability of play equipment and play space.

## *Parent and staff perceptions of centre quality*

Parents and staff considered centres to be best on the criteria of:

- staff modelling good health and hygiene,
- meeting children's physical needs,
- having staff with previous experience,
- teaching children good personal hygiene,
- providing a pleasant atmosphere,
- having a clean building, facilities, toys,
- having warm and caring staff.

Centres were rated by staff and parents as not doing so well on the criteria of:

- home-visiting,
- provisions for parents,
- a written programme schedule,
- parent education,
- promotion of biculturalism,
- provisions for sick children,
- community involvement, and
- reports to parents about child activities and progress.

Parents mean rating scores were significantly higher than staff on a number of criteria. On only one criterion, teaching children personal hygiene, was parents' mean rating lower than that of staff. This suggests that parents largely viewed the quality of their centre's environment and programme practices in a more favourable light than staff did, or their ratings were not as accurate as staff who worked in the centres. Alternatively, staff may have had higher expectations of quality than parents and thus tended to rate themselves lower on a number of criteria.

There were many statistically significant differences between parents' mean ratings at the different centres which indicates that parents' views were influenced by their type of centre. In contrast, differences between staff mean ratings across the centres statistically significant on only a small number of criteria. This suggests that staff perceptions of centre quality were much the same regardless of such differences as centre auspices, philosophy, and hours.

## *Observation of programme practices and centre environments*

The nine centres observed fully met five QRC rating items:

- maintaining a stable peer group,
- encouraging parent contact,
- a staff who had previous work experience with young children,
- a staff who worked well together as a team,
- staff meetings (of some kind) held to decide about activities and the programme.

In addition, centres were also performing very well on the criteria of:

- staff showing children they cared about them,
- having a sensitive settling-in procedures,
- having clear pathways between activity areas,
- being able to cater for special needs children,
- having staff who were warm and caring people, and
- good staff leadership.

The lowest scores received by most centres were on the criteria of:

- home-visiting,
- biculturalism, and
- a written programme schedule.

Centres low ratings on some observation criteria seemed to be linked to the nature of their service. For example, all kindergartens received lower scores on staff-child ratio than the other centres, and this was a factor beyond the control of the individual kindergarten.

Comparison of staff ratings of centre quality and research ratings indicate that there was little difference and suggest that staff can, as objectively, rate their own centres. Staff involvement in centre assessment was found to hold benefits for staff and in some cases lead to changes in centre practices.

## *Relationship between centre quality and parent and staff values*

Large positive correlations between QRC observation ratings of centre quality and parents' importance ratings on the criteria of:

- home-visiting,
- a written programme schedule,
- qualified staff, and
- staff have parenthood experience

suggest that either parents found that these attributes were of a good standard in the centre where these were present (or occurred), or parents chose to go to the centres that were providing these to their satisfaction.

Large negative correlations between QRC observation ratings and staff importance ratings on the criteria of:

- home-visiting,
- pleasant atmosphere, and
- notification of children's infections

suggest that centre quality on these attributes was related to whether staff considered these important.

A negative correlation between parents' importance rating of staff health/hygiene and observation of this, indicates that parents tended to rate it as more important in centres where staff health/hygiene practices were weaker.

## 4.2. Discussion

Parent and staff ratings of the importance of various programme goals were linked to their definitions and views on centre quality. The most important goals of an early childhood programme for parents and staff were to:

- provide a safe and secure environment,
- provide children with warm loving care,
- encourage children to develop confidence in themselves and their abilities,
- encourage children to mix and to get along with one another, and
- encourage children's independence from adults.

Parents rated the goal of teaching pre-school skills higher in importance than staff did, as in Smith and Hubbard's (1988) study. However, the difference was not found to be statistically significant, and the mean scores of both groups indicate that preparing children for school was not considered to be a main goal.

A statistically significant difference was found between staff and parent importance ratings of the goal of keeping children entertained, with parents rating this higher. It seems, therefore, that a babysitting image still pervades even though there has been considerable movement towards professionalisation and government recognition of the educational importance of early childhood centres.

A large and complex matrix of human and physical environment variables were perceived by staff, parents, and experts to comprise the quality of an early childhood centre. For parents, staff and experts the very most important ingredients of centre quality were:

- staff who are warm caring people,
- staff who are responsive to children's social bids and needs,
- staff who demonstrate to children that they really care about them,
- a safe environment,
- developmentally appropriate activities,
- a team-work approach amongst staff, and
- parents and families always feel that they are welcome.

The personal attributes of staff emerged as a key ingredient of centre quality, and this was especially important for parents. Factors effecting children's emotional well-being and the experiences programmes provide for children were critical from both the parents' and staff perspectives. From the perspective of staff, the condition of the physical environment in which they work, their employment conditions, and their relationships with other staff members were important quality considerations.

Parents' descriptions of a good-quality centre suggested that they viewed quality as being most affected by staffing in terms of staff personality and skills in relating with children and providing a warm, secure and happy environment for their play. This supports Swain and Swain's (1982) study that the key components of quality are the 'family-type' ones, and extends upon their findings to show that the social-emotional dimensions were valued highly by parents at other types of centres as well as childcare centres.

The practices of parent education and home-visiting were generally viewed by staff and parents to be minimally important or not important to centre quality. Parent education appears to have been viewed as a patronizing practice by most parents. Many parents did not want home-visiting, and while most staff viewed it as important they felt awkward about it and had inadequate resources to enable home-visiting. That parents do not feel comfortable with home-visiting was also reported in Smith and Hubbard. These findings have implications for the present government's policy initiative - the Parents' As First Teachers project - which involves trained staff visiting families in their homes and showing parents how best to promote their child's development.

Staff, parents, and experts varied in their ratings of the importance of some quality criteria. For example, staff rated criteria of community involvement, clear pathways between activity areas, a stable peer group and regular outings and excursions as more important for centre quality than experts did. Parents rated criteria related to close centre-home relationships, and criteria related to organization of activities, planning, evaluation, and staffing ratios lower in importance than experts and staff did.

Some differences between the parents' perspective and staff and experts' perspectives on quality raise questions about parents' rights, staff-parent collaboration (or discrete functions), and the autonomy of the early childhood professional. For example, parents did not view their involvement to be as closely related to centre quality as staff and experts did. Whether staff should actively attempt to change the views of parents and experiment more boldly in changing the boundaries and barriers that exist between the roles of the parent and professional is an issue to be explored. Conversely, should the influence of the professional be reduced to give parents more say, as in the consultative approach required to prepare charters?

It is interesting that the response rates to the parents' survey reflected differences in parent involvement at the kindergartens, playcentres and childcare centres. The response rate was very high at the playcentres, moderate at the kindergartens, and second approaches to parents were made at two of the three childcare centres. Playcentre parents were more involved in their centres although they did not differ significantly in their ratings of the importance of parent involvement criteria from parents at other centres. The playcentres had a more collaborative approach to running their programmes - with no actual division into parent and professional roles as staff were parents, and parents were encouraged to assist as staff and to undertake playcentre training courses.

It is clear from the results of the parents' survey that those who responded had a strong interest in their children's care and education and had clear views on what they wanted and liked. However, parent-staff communication seemed to have been limited by factors of parent time to attend meetings and participate in decision-making (especially in the case of childcare parents), access to a staff member during the daily programme to talk with (especially in the case of kindergarten parents), and feelings that the programme was the responsibility or the domain of staff.

While staff and experts clearly wanted parent involvement and close linkages with families, parents considered that attention should mainly be centred on their children. This finding has implications for staff training. Should staff be trained to provide for and meet parent's needs, including parent education even if parents do not want this? or should their focus be placed only on the care and education of children within the centre context? Research has demonstrated the importance of a collaborative approach between staff and parents to promote children's development within the early childhood setting (Smith and Swain, 1988). The need to explain to parents the importance of collaboration and personal involvement is a vital issue. Therefore, ways of training staff to be more effective in gaining parents' respect and confidence to successfully fulfil a parent support role need to be urgently addressed.

There were some discrepancies between parent and staff views on their centre's quality. Parents perceived their centres to be performing better on a number of criteria than staff did. For example parents' mean ratings of the criteria of a clean environment, promotion of biculturalism, and qualified staff were significantly higher than staff mean ratings. This finding suggests that either parents' had inflated views about how good their centre was and staff tended to rate themselves harder, or staff had a more indepth knowledge of actual practices and what was provided in their centre's environment. It is likely that the second possibility is more accurate as observational data suggests that parents could be involved more in their centres.

Biculturalism was considered by most parents and some staff to be of little importance for centre quality. The promotion of biculturalism was observed to be minimal at most centres. Yet, addressing the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi in centre policies and programme practices was an essential part of the consultation and charter development process in these centres at the time of data collection (1990 year). This illustrates that care needs to taken in how new policy requirements are introduced because attitudes and practices many not be so quickly and easily changed by government decree if people hold firm beliefs and values.

A comparative analysis of centres serving different cultural groups was not the major purpose of the study, but it is clear that the parents from the Kohanga Reo and the kindergartens, playcentres, and childcare centres differed mainly in respect to the kaupapa (philosophy) of Te Kohanga Reo. For kohanga, a cultural dimension of quality was critical along with care and education dimensions also important to the other types of centres. Kohanga parents' ratings of the importance of staff parenthood experience, biculturalism, and recognition of family values and customs in the programme were significantly higher than those of parents at other centres. Promotion of one's own culture was rated by every kohanga parent as being a very important goal for the early childhood centre, but it was considered to be one of the least important goals by parents at the other centres.

Quality criteria related to staff inter-relationships and provisions for staff were not valued as highly by playcentre staff compared to other staff. This could be because sessions at both playcentres were operated by a single supervisor with the assistance of parents and, therefore, these criteria were not viewed to be as relevant for assuring centre quality as they were at other centres where more staff were employed. The formality of a written programme schedule was also not as important for playcentre staff, and the reasons for this need to be further explored.

The family-like atmosphere quality of childcare as identified by childcare centre representatives, was supported by the higher importance ratings of childcare staff and parents on criteria of peer group stability, providing regular outings and excursions, and meeting children's physical needs. The finding that childcare centres had a greater focus on meeting children's physical needs (from the perspectives of parents, staff, and representatives of the different centres, and from observation of the practices of centres) agrees with Meade's (1985) conclusion that this is a main difference between childcare and kindergarten and playcentre programmes.

The data on staff and parents' concerns shows how environments may be better planned. The main concerns expressed by parents were to do with the way their children were cared for, the kind of play environment that was provided and how parent-staff separation was handled. Staff were worried mostly about problems of sufficient funding, problems in their physical working environment, the need for improvements in staffing (number of trained staff, and staff characteristics/attitudes), and the lack of support they received in their job.

Although staff liked working with children and viewed this as really important, centres had high turnovers of staff. This findings has policy implications for both the government in their quest to enhance the quality of early education and the management of individual centres. Why do staff tend to change every year or two? While staff reported that they gained much personal satisfaction from their work they also found it physically stressful and few stated wages/salaries as a reason for wanting to work in the early childhood field. Another, more recent possibility to emerge is work-load stress, especially that brought on by the introduction of the requirement to develop centre charters (see Report 1 from this research project). Sarah has since found that few of the original staff who participated in the study were at their centres six months after data collection: all kindergartens and kohanga had experienced some changes in teaching staff, and the three childcare centres had all lost their directors while one childcare centre had experienced an almost complete change of staff.

As in Kennedy et al's (1990) study of Mobile Preschool Units the problem of adequately providing for the developmental needs of children across all age-groups in a programme was noted in the results. It was commented on by some parents and staff, and observed in some centres. Observations revealed that at one childcare centre the problem was one of lack of age-appropriate equipment and at a further two centres staff could have done more to extend the learning of either younger or older children.

The operational theories of staff were not examined in any depth (Bell, 1990), but the study demonstrates that staff had a fairly realistic outlook on the nature of their practice and ability to provide a quality environment according to the availability of resources and the philosophy of their service. Few significant statistical differences were noted between head staff members perceptions of their practice and observations of it.

Meade (1985) has argued that self-reflection through formative evaluation of programmes is critical for promoting the quality of staff practices. The Quality Review Checklist was helpful to staff for reflecting on and identifying ways to improve centre quality in terms of their own goals and practices.

This study has been an exploratory study of different perspectives on quality and has involved observation of centres. One limitation has been that the observation instrument developed for the study contained a range of criteria, not all of which were later found to be key ingredients of quality from the perspectives of staff, parents, and experts and for the particular type of centre observed. A further stage in the study could be to go back to the centres and to include a larger sample of centres from other regions, and assess centre quality using a revised instrument in conjunction with other observational methods such as running records of children's behaviour and staff interactions.

A cultural perspective on quality was touched on in the study but not explored in any depth. This was the first study of its kind involving Te Kohanga Reo in the Otago region, carried out by a pakeha in a University institution. The response of the two kohanga whanau was initially one of concern and reticence. Developments since data collection suggest that if the study was implemented again the participation rate could be very high (see Appendix 3). Quality is an important issue in the development of Te Kohanga Reo. Appropriate methodologies need to be developed to study the research problem from a Maori perspective.

This study has highlighted the importance of a multidimensional view of quality. Quality is not just an empirical issue but a value issue also. Greater breadth of understanding has been possible than if the usual science of child development approach had been taken. In addition to the cultural perspective on quality other perspectives remain to be investigated, for example how do children view their centre's quality?

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*Appendix 1(a) Parents' Questionnaire*

# *The Early Childhood Centre Quality Study*

## *Parents Questionnaire*

Dear Parents

I am trying to find out what things are crucial to quality in early childhood education and care. The views of parents are of central importance. It would help me greatly in my investigation if you would take the time to complete this questionnaire. This information will also be very useful for your centre.

Please do not be put off by the length of this questionnaire. You should find that it will be quite quick to complete because most questions only ask you to choose from among the responses provided.

This questionnaire has been designed to find out what families need and believe to be important for children. A summary of this information will be given to the teachers and committee members, and this should help in preparing the new charter for the centre. Your answers will also help me to identify what quality is from the parents' perspective and the results will be reported to the Ministry of Education who are supporting this investigation. Please be assured that your name and individual answers will be kept confidential in all verbal and written reports of the results (within the centre and beyond).

Please complete and return the questionnaire by **Thursday 22nd February** to your centre. If there are any further comments you would like to add about this questionnaire or your centre please write these on the back of the last page. An envelope is attached to place the completed questionnaire in to ensure confidentiality.

If you have any queries or require assistance please call me ph 798-619 (Education Department, University). Or leave a message if I am not in the office. Thank you in anticipation for the time and effort you will spend on the questionnaire.

Sincerely

Sarah

Sarah Farquhar
(Ph.D. Student)

P.S. If you do not have room to complete the questions in the spaces provided, please use the back of the pages.

## SECTION A

1. How did you first hear about this centre?

2. Did you look at any other early childhood centres or enquire into any other forms of care before deciding on this centre? YES / NO, Why?

3. Are you currently using any other form of pre-school/child care arrangement? YES / NO What? and Why?

4. What is your involvement in the centre? *(for example, parent-helping, attending meetings, etc.)*

5. What features of the centre *(including staff, programme, environment and committee)* are you most happy with?

6. What features of the centre(*including staff, programme, environment and committee*) are you least happy with?

7. Please define and describe what a ***good -quality*** early childhood centre is from your point of view:

## *SECTION B*

The statements below describe goals and principles of early childhood centres which are important to different people. What is your view on the importance of these goals?

Please **circle the number** on the rating scale that best reflects **how important** you feel each goal to be.

**Importance Rating Scale**
4 = very important
3 = important
2 = moderately important
1 = not important

1. Teach pre-school skills (e.g. alphabet) 4 3 2 1
2. Provide warm loving care for children 4 3 2 1
3. Parent education (e.g. information on child-rearing) 4 3 2 1
4. Help children to develop self-confidence 4 3 2 1
5. Encourage children's independence 4 3 2 1
6. Encourage social relationships with other children 4 3 2 1
7. Encourage children to learn to relate with other adults 4 3 2 1
8. Promote children's spiritual development 4 3 2 1
9. Foster children's compliance with social expectations e.g. to comply with rules, follow instructions/commands 4 3 2 1
10. Meet children's individual physical needs 4 3 2 1
11. Provide a safe and secure environment for children 4 3 2 1
12. Assist children to develop their language skills 4 3 2 1
13. Promote children's aesthetic development (e.g.drawing) 4 3 2 1
14. Keep children entertained 4 3 2 1
15. Promote intellectual development/conceptual understanding 4 3 2 1
16. Provide opportunities to practice and develop physical skills 4 3 2 1
17. Partnership with parents in providing early education/care 4 3 2 1
18. Supports children's individual learning characteristics/style 4 3 2 1
19. Promote language and values of children's own culture 4 3 2 1
20. Promote language and values of other culture(s) 4 3 2 1
21. Promote children's moral development 4 3 2 1
22. Provide support and friendship to parents 4 3 2 1

## SECTION C

This section seeks information about:

(A) How important you believe each of the features listed below are for quality early education and care, and
(B) How you feel your own centre rates on these features.

For each of the features below, please draw a **circle** around the number on each of the two rating scales which best reflects your views.

| **(A) Importance Rating** | **(B) Centre Rating** |
|---|---|
| 4 = very important | 3 = met |
| 3 = important | 2 =partially met |
| 2 = moderately important | 1 = not met |
| 1 = not important | |

### *Children's Happiness*

| | A<br>**Importance** | B<br>**Centre Rating** |
|---|---|---|
| Staff show affection and a caring attitude towards the children | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Staff are responsive to children (e.g. listen and reply) | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Staff help new children to settle in (e.g can bring a familiar toy) | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Children are with other familiar children (i.e. peer group is not frequently changing) | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Staff visit children and families at home (i.e. home-visiting) | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Parent contact with centre is encouraged | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Children's physical needs are met (e.g. food, rest) | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Excessive punishment is not used | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| The atmosphere at the centre is pleasant (e.g. adult voices do not dominate, laughter) | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |

**Any other important or very important factors for ensuring children's happiness?**

## *Safety, health and hygiene*

| | Importance | Centre Rating |
|---|---|---|
| There are clear pathways between activity areas (i.e. little clutter and activities not disrupted by people moving around) | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Toys and equipment are kept in good repair and are safe | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Children are under staff supervision at all times | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Centre appears clean (e.g. floors are regularly swept, play areas, toys and bathroom washing facilities regularly cleaned | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Personal hygiene is taught to the children and consistently reinforced in the programme | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| The staff appear healthy and model good personal hygiene | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Provisions for sick children, (e.g. an area in which they may rest) | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| All parents are informed if a child has an infection or contagious disease | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |

**Any other important or very important features for health, hygiene and safety?**

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

## *Programme*

| | **Importance** | **Centre Rating** |
|---|---|---|
| There is a written daily programme schedule | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| There are interesting activities to keep children stimulated | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Programme aims developed from/based on child and family needs | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| A variety of play equipment and resources in sufficient quantity | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Activities are appropriate to children's age and ability | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| There is a balance of child initiated and staff initiated activities | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| There is a balance of indoor and outdoor activities | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| There is a mixture of small group and large group activities, and activities for children to do on their own | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Changes/modifications are made for children with special needs | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Cultural awareness is promoted in the programme | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Non-sexist behaviour, language, and activities are promoted | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Programme supports individual families values and customs | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Programme is bicultural | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Staff join children in their play | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Children are taken on regular outings and excursions | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Staff carry out assessments of the programme and activities and use this information in programme planning | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |

**Any other important or very important programme features?**

## *Staffing*

| | Importance | Centre Rating |
|---|---|---|
| Staff have formal qualifications in early childhood | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Staff are parents' themselves | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Staff are experienced in working with young children | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Staff are warm, caring people (i.e. personality) | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Staff work together as a team | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Staff meet regularly to plan the programme | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| The head staff member provides good leadership | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Staff attend refresher training courses | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Staff turnover is low (i.e. they are there for a number of years) | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Staff are professionals (e.g. belong to professional associations) | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Provisions are made for staff needs in the environment (e.g. separate staff room, adult toilet) | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Group size (i.e. total number of children attending) is not too big | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| There is a high ratio of adults to children | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |

What do you think the group size (total number of children at the centre ) should be? ____________

If you recommend that group-size should be different according to the age of the children, please specify:

______________________________________________________________

What do you think the adult/child ratio should be? ____adult to ____children

If you recommend that the adult/child ratio should be different for different age-groups of children, please specify:

______________________________________________________________

**Any other important or very important staffing features?**

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

## *Parent, Family and Community Involvement*

| | Importance | Centre Rating |
|---|---|---|
| Parents and families are made to always feel welcome | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Community involvement is encouraged (e.g. traffic officer visits) | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Professionals/organizations are called on for advice/assistance | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Parents are provided with information about staff practices and programme philosophies | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Parent education opportunities are provided | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Staff demonstrate that they consider parents to be joint partners in the care and education of their children | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Parents are part of the decision-making process in the centre | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Staff show friendship and support of parents (e.g. when they are stressed or have problems) | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| Reports on children's activities and progress are given to parents | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |
| There are provisions for parents at the centre (e.g. magazines, comfy chairs to rest on) | 4 3 2 1 | 3 2 1 |

**Any other important or very important features for supporting parent, family and community involvement?**

___

___

___

## *SECTION D*

**The following questions are asked for statistical purposes.**

1. For each of your children currently attending this centre please state:

| | 1st Child | 2nd Child | 3rd Child |
|---|---|---|---|
| (a) their age(s) | | | |
| (b) how long they have been enrolled | | | |
| (c) how many sessions a week they attend | | | |
| (d) the weekly cost in fees or donations | | | |
| (e) any special needs your children may have? | | | |
| (f) what ethnic group your child(ren) belong to | | | |

2. What is your relationship to the child(ren) who attend this kindergarten? *(e.g. mother, father, partner to the child's parent)* ____________________________________________

3. Is there anyone else who has major responsibility for your child(ren)?____________________

4. What do you mostly do during the time that your child attends the centre? (please tick)

_____ Full-time paid employment _____ Part-time paid employment

_____ Leisure/sports activity _____ Household work

_____ Stay with child(ren) _____ Involved in centre activities e.g. parent-helping

_____ Other, please describe: ____________

5. If you ticked part or full-time paid employment please specify your occupation: ______________

6. Please indicate what you estimate your gross family income was in 1989:

___ 0 - $10,0000 ___ $10,000 + - $20,000

___ $20,000+ - $30,000 ___ $30,000+ - $40,000

___ $40,00+ - $50,0000 ___ $50,000+

7. What was your highest school leaving qualification?______________________________

8. What (if any) qualifications have you obtained since leaving school?____________________

***THANK YOU***

***Appendix 1 (b) Staff questionnaire sections A and C that are not in common with the parents' questionnaire.***

YOUR POSITION: ____________________

CENTRE NAME: ____________________

## *SECTION A*

1. For what reason(s) are you working in the early childhood field? ____________________

2. Have you on any occasions discussed the conditions of your work with other staff, union representatives, or other people? YES/NO. If yes what were your concerns and who did you discuss them with?

3. What kinds of decisions do you make or contribute to? (i.e. your main responsibilities)

4. What features of the centre (*including staff, programme, environment, committee*) are you ***most*** happy with?

5. What features of the centre (*including staff, programme, environment and committee*) are you ***least*** happy with?

6. Please define and describe what a ***good quality*** early childhood centre is from your point of view:

## SECTION D

**The following questions are asked for statistical purposes.**

1. How many years have you been working at this centre? ________ years

2. How many hours each week do you work at this centre? ________ hours

3. What is your average **weekly** pay (*before tax and deductions*)? $______

4. What (if any) recognized early childhood qualifications do you have? (*please give full name of Certificate or Diploma and year of award)*

5. What qualifications or courses are you currently completing (if any)?

6. What was your highest school leaving qualification?

7. What prior experience (if any) in working with children and families have you had? (*please describe type of work and number of years and months*)

8. Please indicate your age (place a tick in the appropriate box)

| 15 - 20 | 21 - 25 | 26 - 30 | 31 - 35 | 36 - 40 | 41 - 45 | 45+ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | |

9. What ethnic group do you consider you belong to? (please tick)

____ Maori　　_____ Pakeha/New Zealander

____ Pacific Islander　　_____ Other, please describe: _________________

10. If you have children of your own please state how many and their ages:

_________ ***(number of children)*** ______ ***(age)*** ______ ***(age)*** ______ ***(age)***

### *Appendix 1 (c) Expert Questionnaire*

*(questions on experts' background that were asked in addition to a question to rate the importance of different quality criteria as contained in both the parents' and the staff questionnaires).*

1. What is your current work position? ______________________________

2. Which early childhood groups are you associated with or have work/professional contacts with?

_____ Kindergarten
_____ Kohanga Reo
_____ Playcentre
_____ Childcare
_____ Pacific Island Centres
_____ Other, please specify:
_____ Not applicable, or no contact with any early childhood groups

3. Briefly outline the nature (type and extent) of your role and involvement within the early childhood field:

______________________________

______________________________

4. How long (years/months) have you been involved or associated with the early childhood field:

______________________________

5. What (if any) formal qualifications and training in early education and care do you have?

______________________________

______________________________

6. What (if any) is your highest tertiary education diploma or degree?

______________________________

7. Are you are parent?

_____ Yes
_____ No

8. What is your sex?

_____ Female
_____ Male

9. To what ethnic group do you describe yourself as belonging to?

_____ N Z European
_____ Maori
_____ Pacific Islander
_____ Other, please specify:

***THANKS***

*Appendix 2(a) Quality Review Checklist*

## *QUALITY REVIEW CHECKLIST*

*For Research Study on Early Childhood Centres*

***(please do not copy or quote without permission from the researcher)***

### *Purpose*

The QUALITY REVIEW CHECKLIST (QRC) has been drafted for the research study on Quality in Early Childhood Centres. The first part of the study looked at what participants believed quality was. This part of the study is an attempt to turn goals and values into something which can be observed.

Data has been collected on parents' and staff values about the importance of the each rating criterion in the QRC. The QRC will be used to observe children's and adults experiences and activities, as well as the quality of their centre environment. Observation of centre quality will enable the relationship between parents' and staff values about what is important to ensure good-quality early education and care and the actual practices of staff and centres to be examined in the study.

Individual centres are not expected to meet each criteria as centres vary on what components of a good-quality programme are valued.

The QRC is designed to be used only in centres that are licensed (i.e. they meet government's minimum standards). In its present form it is appropriate for kindergartens, playcentres, and childcare centres but not for any Te Kohanga Reo or other language nests.

### *Methodology*

The methodology is based largely upon the work done by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and their Centre Accreditation Project.

The QRC is designed for staff to be involved in its implementation. Head staff members complete the QRC (with other staff if possible), they receive feedback from the researcher and have the opportunity to discuss and compare observations and centre ratings.

### *Description of the QRC*

The QRC is designed to give an overall picture of the quality of a centre, including dynamic aspects such as social interactions, static aspects such as furnishings, and regulatory aspects such as staff training.

The current situation is rated (based on observation and knowledge of what is known to happen but is not observed due to factors such as the weather) rather than stated intentions or planned changes.

It is divided into five sections:

| | |
|---|---|
| Section A | Children's Happiness |
| Section B | Safety, Health, Hygiene |
| Section C | Programme |
| Section D | Staffing |
| Section E | Links with Parents, Families and Community |

Most criterion include descriptions of what should be considered in making a rating. Centres should be given a "**one**" if the criteria is not met or if the practice described is not carried out, "**two**" if is partially met, "**three**" if it is mostly met, and "**four**" if it is fully met.

The QRC is divided into three steps:

1. Researcher (and co-observer) observes at each centre, interviews at least five parents and the head staff member (and other staff if possible).

2. The head staff member (along with other staff if possible) also completes the QRC by rating the extent to which their centre meets the criteria.

3. The researcher (and co-observer) meets with each head staff member to compare and discuss each others ratings. A summary sheet will be used to write down each set of ratings and to make brief notes on discussion.

## *A. Children's Happiness*

### A.1 Staff communicate to children that they care about them

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] Show affection by smiling, touching, holding, and talking softly to children.*
*[] Demonstrate a caring attitude by stepping in to help children when needed.*
*[] Show an interest in children's talk about themselves, their experiences, feelings, etc.*
*[] Talk with children on a one-to-one basis during routines (arrival, eating, etc).*
Staff / Researcher Comments

### A.2 Staff are responsive to children

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] Respond quickly and appropriately to children's efforts to initiate interaction, verbal and non-verbal (e.g. return a wave, reply with an open ended question).*
*[] Listen attentively and patiently to children*
*[] Praise children for their achievements*
*[] Are always available to the children - to show an interest in them and their activities*
Staff / Researcher Comments

### A.3. There is a sensitive settling-in process for children

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] Some method for familiarizing new children and parents (e.g. short visits)*
*[] Parents are encouraged to stay as long as it takes for children to settle.*
*[] Infants/toddlers (and older children who are not settling well) are allowed an attachment object from home (e.g. teddy, rag or blanket).*
*[] New children are told when their parent is leaving and when they are expected to return.*
*[] Parents are invited to phone the centre to check on their children, or staff call them.*
Staff / Researcher Comments

### A. 4. Peer group stability

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] No more than 25 percent of the children attend infrequently or for less than half of the available sessions.*
*[] Parents are encouraged to use the centre on a frequent and regular basis (e.g. staff point out the benefits of children attending even when parents do not need to use the centre).*
Staff / Researcher Comments

### A.5. Home-visiting

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] All families are home visited prior to or after enrolling.*
*[] Staff and parents use home visits to exchange information on home life and the centre, and to foster close relationships.*

Staff / Researcher Comments

### A.6. Parent contact encouraged

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] Parents are encouraged to enter the centre when dropping off an picking up their children.*
*[] Parents are given details about who to contact regarding matters related either to their child or to the centre (e.g. centre telephone number and after hours contact).*
*[] Parents are kept up-to-date with what is happening in the centre (e.g. newsletters, notices).*
*[] Parents are encouraged to stay and to participate in the programme as they feel comfortable.*
*[] Parents are invited to join their children for meals/snacks, special activities, and excursions.*

Staff / Researcher Comments

### A.7. Children's physical needs are met

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] Drink (e.g. water, milk, juice) is available to the children at all times.*
*[] Children have sufficient food and drink at meal and snack times.*
*[] Meal and snack times are not more than 3 hours apart.*
*[] Children do not get too hot or too cold (e.g. spare jackets or sun-shades are available for children, room temperature is regulated).*
*[] Infants' and toddlers' napkins/pants are regularly checked and changed if needed.*
*[] Children have easy access to toilet and potty facilities.*

Staff / Researcher Comments

**A.8. Excessive punishment is not used**

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] Behaviour management techniques are appropriate to the age and developmental understanding of children (e.g. with a four-year-old alternative solutions may be discussed whereas a toddler may be redirected to a new activity and staff may simply point out what the toddler had done wrong).*
*[] Negative methods of discipline are not used (e.g. no smacking, shouting, threatening).*
*[] Positive techniques and methods are used (e.g. redirection, listening, reinforcement)*
*[] Staff do not use more reprimands or negative statements than positive statements and non-verbal reinforcers.*
*[] Staff accept children's feelings and provide acceptable outlets for children to express them.*
*[] Parents are asked about how they manage their children's behaviour so that no methods used in the centre are excessive in the individual child's experience. Note that parents' methods where these are negative should not be adopted by staff.*

Staff / Researcher Comments

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**A.9. Pleasant atmosphere**

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] Adults' voices do not dominate*
*[] There is laughter and smiling among children and staff.*
*[] Children appear happy in their play and other activities*
*[] The atmosphere is generally calm and staff and children are relaxed but busy.*

Staff / Researcher Comments

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## *B Safety, Health and Hygiene*

### B.1. Clear pathways between activity areas

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] Children and adults are able to move from one area to another without disturbing activities.*
*[] Toys, materials, and equipment are not blocking or impeding movement.*
*[] Activity areas are well defined through clear divisions of space.*
Staff / Researcher Comments

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### B.2. Safety of environment

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] Infant/toddler toys are large enough not to be swallowed*
*[] Large pieces of equipment (e.g. swings) and furniture (e.g. wall shelf units) are fixed securely.*
*[] There are no sharp edges, protruding nails, wood splinters, broken pieces or missing pieces .*
*[] Equipment is appropriate to children's age and developmental status (e.g. for toddlers the highest place on their climbing equipment is no further from the ground than their height).*
*[] There are no safety problems in the use of equipment (e.g. no toy-box with a heavy lid).*
Staff / Researcher Comments

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### B.3. Supervision

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] A staff member (or adult) is located in all rooms and areas where children are (except for toilet and wash room, but an adult should be within hearing distance)*
*[] Staff attention to children's movements and activities is high, (e.g. not engrossed in conversation with other adults whilst children play).*
*[] Infants and toddlers are not left unattended. Over-three-year-olds may be supervised by sight and sound (e.g. staff supervising the playground area need only be within hearing distance of children playing behind bushes).*
Staff / Researcher Comments

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### B.4. Clean building, facilities, equipment and toys

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] Tables/highchairs are wiped and floors are swept after meals and snacks.*
*[] Toys are picked up / tidied when no longer needed or in use.*
*[] Areas are kept tidy and rubbish removed from activity areas during the programme.*
*[] The bathroom, all table surfaces (including floor if there are crawlers) and all toys that are mouthed are washed daily and disinfected at least weekly.*
*[] Caregiving equipment is kept clean (e.g. cover of changing table is disinfected or charged after each use).*
*[] Areas and equipment are free from contamination (e.g. insect or rodent contamination, sand-pit is kept covered when not in use).*

Staff / Researcher Comments

### B.5. Children's personal hygiene

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] There are scheduled times for practicing personal hygiene routines (e.g. hand-washing before meal / snacks).*
*[] Personal hygiene standards are reinforced as part of the educational programme (e.g. children have separate combs, they are taught and remained about the importance of placing their hand over their mouth when they sneeze).*
*[] Children are encouraged to develop independence in practicing personal hygiene (e.g. supervise and praise them in washing their own hands rather than doing it for them).*

Staff / Researcher Comments

### B.6. Staff model good health/hygiene practices

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] Do not work or visit the centre if they are sick or have an infection which could be passed on.*
*[] Wash their hands with soap and water before feeding infants/toddlers, preparing and serving food, after changing children's nappies and pants, and after nose wiping or cleaning up a child's vomit.*
*[] Model good health habits to children and parents. (e.g. they do not smoke at work, and they maintain good standards of personal grooming such as clean hair and nails)*
*[] Discourage children and other adults from taking food into children's play and toilet areas.*

Staff / Researcher Comments

## B.7. Provision for sick children

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] The centre has a stated policy for coping with child sickness , (e.g. parents are notified, well-children are protected, a staff member cares for the sick child). Parents and staff know the policy.*
*[] There is a comfortable, quiet area set aside and always available for any sick children.*
*[] Parents are informed and reminded to keep children at home if they have a contagious disease.*
Staff / Researcher Comments

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## B.8. Parents notified of any contagious disease/infection

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] All parents are informed (e.g. verbally, or a notice on the door) if any child or adult at the centre has a disease or infection that could have been passed on.*
*[] Some literature for parents on common childhood infections and diseases is kept at the centre for staff to use in discussions with parents .*
*[] Staff know relevant health professionals to refer parents to.*
Staff / Researcher Comments

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## *C Programme*

### C.1. Written schedule of routines and activities

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] There is a written schedule and it includes a list of the main activities and planned variations on these, as well specifying the approximate times for different routines.*

*[] It is displayed in a conspicuous place for staff, parents, and visitors to see.*

Staff / Researcher Comments

### C.2. Interesting /stimulating activities

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] There is a variety of equipment and materials suitable for promoting children's motor-skill, psycho-social, language and intellectual development.*

*[] The location of some activities and equipment is changed daily/weekly.*

*[] New materials are added and slight changes are made to regular activities from time to time to maintain and stimulate children's interest.*

*[] Not all play materials are available all of the time but some are periodically set up or introduced as special activities (e.g. a group card game, gardening tools, a cooking activity).*

*[] Equipment and materials are colourful and attractive to the children's age-group (e.g. mobiles for babies to reach out to, paper gliders for four-year-olds to try to fly)*

Staff / Researcher Comments

### C.3. Programme based on consideration of child and family needs

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] Staff talk informally with parents about how they can provide an early childhood programme that fulfils their needs.*

*[] There are some more formal channels of communication about child and family needs (e.g. staff-parent meetings, home questionnaires, home visits).*

*[] Staff do written observations of children's skill levels, their behaviour and activities, discuss their observational notes with children's parents, and use this information when making decisions about the programme.*

Staff / Researcher Comments

### C.4. Sufficient toys, equipment and resources for children

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] For infants and toddlers there is a sufficient quantity of toys and equipment to avoid problems of waiting, competing and fighting for scarce resources.*

*[] For older children there is sufficient toys, equipment, and materials to avoid the above problems whilst encouraging some co-operative play to occur.*

Staff / Researcher Comments

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### C.5. Developmentally appropriate activities

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] Activities are appropriate to the age of the children (see N.A.E.Y.C. guidelines on developmentally appropriate practices for children ).*

*[] Activities are individually appropriate: suit children's developing abilities, cater for their personal interests, and are challenging for them.*

*[] For children who tend to involve themselves mainly in activities that are not challenging the staff introduce and guide them towards appropriately challenging and rewarding activities.*

Staff / Researcher Comments

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### C.6. Balance of child and staff initiated activities

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] There are some adult-directed activities and some activities that are initiated by the children which staff follow up on (e.g. by providing further ideas or materials)*

*(] Most activities are available for children to self-select and participate in.*

*[] After adult-directed activities children are left or given the opportunity to continue the particular activity in their own way, and to repeat and practice if they wish.*

*[] Children are not left to engage mostly in aimless behaviour and nonconstructive activities during free-play periods, but rather they are encouraged to participate in constructive activities and staff provide guidance where needed.*

Staff / Researcher Comments

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### C.7. Balance of indoor and outdoor activities

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] Children have access to both indoor and outdoor play areas as weather permits*

*[] The environment is designed to encourage access, e.g. some sheltered outdoor areas, sheltered veranda, centre doors are opened and hooked back on warm days).*

*[] In cases where the weather limits access, some typically outdoor activities are brought inside or indoor activities may be altered to foster play that occurs outside (e.g. boxes are arranged for climbing ), and some typically inside activities are taken outside (on warm/hot days when children tend to congregate outside).*

*[] There is some daily interchange of indoor and outdoor activities to encourage children to sample a wider range of activities (e.g. inside tea-party equipment , wooden stove, etc may be placed for a day in the outside sand-pit)*

Staff / Researcher Comments

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### C.8. Activities for different group-sizes

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] There are activity areas, both indoors and outdoors, where children can play alone or with a peer (e.g. book corner, small two-seat activity tables, playhouses, swings).*

*[] Children are free to come and go from large-group (five or more children) activities as they choose.*

Staff / Researcher Comments

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### C.9. Provisions for special needs children

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] If no children with special needs are enrolled the management has a commitment towards providing for any child regardless of their special needs (i.e. management has a stated policy on accepting any special needs child, and will ensure that any necessary modifications to the equipment and facilities are made to ensure a special needs child enjoys full access).*

*[] Indoor and outdoor areas are accessible to all children (e.g. for wheel chair children or children on crutches there are ramps, hand rails and wide doors).*

*[] Equipment and materials are modified as needed or special equipment and materials are added to meet children's special needs (e.g. a paint-brush of a thickness that can be more easily held by a child with a motor coordination problem).*

Staff / Researcher Comments

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**C.10. Promotion of cultural awareness**

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] Cultural awareness is promoted through materials and activities (e.g. multi-racial toys, materials, books and wall posters, chopsticks and various types of different eating instruments in the family play area, etc).*

*[] Adult-initiated multi-cultural activities are sometimes included, either as a special weekly theme or as part of the on-going daily programme (e.g. stories are read about cultures in other countries, parents are invited to share food, crafts, etc., from their culture)*

**Staff / Researcher Comments**

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**C.11. Bicultural Programme**

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] The majority of staff speak some basic Maori words.*

*[] Maori language is incorporated into the programme (e.g. Maori songs, and activities).*

*[] Staff speak some Maori in their interactions with children, and particularly to welcome Maori parents.*

*[] There is a balance of books, posters, toys, materials (e.g. natural and manufactured) and equipment that reflect European and Maori cultures.*

*[] Practices which are offensive to Maori cultural values are avoided (e.g. using macaroni, food, to make necklaces) and practices that reflect Maori culture are practiced (e.g. sharing of food with visitors).*

**Staff / Researcher Comments**

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**C.12. Support of family values and customs**

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] Staff show an interest in the values and customs of each family (e.g. by asking if there are any aspects of the programme that they do not wish their child to be included in; and if there are any ways they can support their values such as in providing appropriate food for children's snacks/meals, or celebrating their cultural festivals).*

*[] Staff respect differences in the cultural and family values (e.g. by allowing Sikh boys to wear their turbans, taking into account culturally different ways of relating, and allowing and encourage children to continue using their first language).*

Staff / Researcher Comments

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### C.13. Non-sexist

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] Sexist language is discouraged in the centre.*
*[] Sexist resource material is avoided and non-sexist material is included (e.g. books depicting boys performing both masculine and feminine tasks).*
*[] Staff provide both boys and girls with equal opportunities to take part in every activity.*
*[] Staff provide androgynous role models (e.g. demonstrate that they can hammer in a nail, do the dishes, etc, and do not need to call a "man" or a "father" in for assistance unless particular trade skills are needed).*

Staff / Researcher Comments

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### C.14. Staff join children in their play

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] They participate in children's play: they join in and follow children's leads and suggestions rather than directing their play.*
*[] Talk with children about ideas relevant and related to their play.*
*[] Provide children with new or additional materials and resources as needed or when appropriate.*

**Staff / Researcher Comments**

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### C.15. Outings and excursions

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] Outings occur as part of the everyday programme (e.g. a small group may be taken to the diary to buy some bread, or to the park nearby to look at the autumn trees).*
*[] Every child is encouraged to participate in at least some outings.*
*[] All children have the opportunity to go on a major excursion (e.g. museum, city/farm, airport) at least once every six months.*

Staff / Researcher Comments

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### C. 16. Assessment/evaluation

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] Periodic assessments of what is happening in the programme are made (e.g. girls and boys participation rates in different activities may be observed and recorded or the nature and frequency of staff-parent interactions).*
*[] This information is made available to all staff (and parents where applicable).*
*[] Assessment data is evaluated (e.g. through discussion, and reference to past practices and planned future practices). This should lead to decisions on the continuation or strengthening of practices and promote improvements and new ideas.*

Staff / Researcher Comments

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## *D. Staffing*

### D.1. Qualified staff

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] All staff, who are countered in the minimum requirements for staff-child ratio hold a qualification recognised by the Ministry of Education for work in an early childhood centre. Note that unqualified staff may also be employed but they should be in addition to rather than part of the minimum staff-child ratio.*

Staff / Researcher Comments

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### D.2. Staff have parenthood experience

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] All staff have their own child(ren) (i.e. staff who comprise the minimum adult-child ratio)*

Staff / Researcher Comments

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### D.3. Staff are experienced with young children

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] All staff have had previous practical experience working with children under-five years of age (equivalent to six or more months of full-time work in any field related to young children or at their present centre). Note that this only applies to staff who comprise the minimum adult-child ratio.*

Staff / Researcher Comments

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### D.4. Staff are warm caring people

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] They make children and parents feel accepted, and liked.*

*[] They speak with all children, parents and other family members in a friendly manner (e.g. chatty, good listening skills, address on first-name basis).*

Staff / Researcher Comments

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### D.5. Staff work together as a team

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] When one staff member is unable to complete a task or having difficulty, other staff will step in to assist.*
*[] Staff are aware of each others strengths and weaknesses and work effectively together.*
*[] There is good communication between staff about the children, programme, and organization matters (e.g. staff pass on messages from parents).*

Staff / Researcher Comments

### D.6. Staff regularly meet for programme planning

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] All staff meet on a regular basis to discuss or consult on programme planning.*

Staff / Researcher Comments

### D.7. Head staff member provides good leadership

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] Ensures that new staff know and understand centre policies, procedures, and philosophy.*
*[] Provides support, guidance and advice to staff where appropriate.*
*[] Provides staff with feedback on their work in a non-threatening affirming way.*
*[] Is easily approachable about matters relating both to the programme and to their conditions of work.*
*[] Helps to make staff feel that their work is valued.*
*[] Facilitates good relationships amongst staff (e.g. undercurrents are identified, discussed, and there is a commitment to resolving disagreements)*

Staff / Researcher Comments

### D.8. Refresher training

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] Staff regularly take part in refresher training and inservice courses (e.g. personal development courses, visits to other centres, in-service courses organized by ECDU or other relevant groups, further academic studies and course work).*
*[] Records of staff qualifications and courses attended are kept at the centre for reference when planning programmes of staff development.*

Staff / Researcher Comments

### D.9. Staff stability

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] Staff turnover is low (i.e. no more than 1/4 staff each year leave for reasons other than low enrolment).*
*[] All staff, who are countered in the minimum staff-child ratio, are employed on a permanent basis.*
*[] The centre has a good retention rate for staff (i.e. the majority of staff tend to stay for at least two years).*
Staff / Researcher Comments

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### D.10. Professionalism

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] A collection of relevant and recent research articles and professional literature is maintained*
*[] The centre and/or staff belong to a professional organization or representative group (e.g. Combined Early Childhood Union, Playcentre Federation).*
*[] Staff carry out peer evaluations and encourage constructive comments and criticism about their work.*
*[] Staff understand the importance of their work and are able to articulate this (describing the goals and objectives of their programme to others).*
* *Staff may also publicly advocate for quality early childhood services, professional recognition, and for the rights of children and families.*
Staff / Researcher Comments

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### D.11. Provisions for staff in the centre

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] A separate room or area (not used for children's activities) for staff use when taking their breaks, staff socials, staff meetings, etc.*
*[] An adult-sized toilet and washing facilities for staff use.*
*[] Comfy chairs for staff to use.*
*[] Some secure cupboard space for personal belongings.*
Staff / Researcher Comments

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### D.12. Group size

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] To rate a "4" a centre (or each classroom within a centre complex) should have no more than:*
- *30 three to five year-old*
- *15 two to three year old*
- *10 or fewer under-two-year old*

*Or*
- *25 children between 2 to 5-6yr*
- *15 children between birth to 5-6 yrs (where infants/toddlers make up at least half of the total number of children).*

Staff / Researcher Comments

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### D.13. Staff-child ratio

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] To rate a "4" a ratio is needed of at least:*
- 1 adult to 3 infants (birth to 1 year)
- 1 adult to 4 toddlers (1 year + to 2 years)
- 1 adult to 5 two and three-and-a-half year olds
- 1 adult to 8 children over three years six months

*Note that the average age of the children attending should be calculated to determine the adult-child ratio. The ratio of 1:3 for infants must, however, be maintained.*

*[] A contact list of relievers is kept so staff can be quickly replaced if needed to maintain the adult-child ratio.*

*[] There is an attempt to maintain a high adult-child ratio at all times, depending upon the situation and during times when staff take their breaks (e.g. more staff may be needed to cope with lunch-time routines, or to assist with excursions).*

Staff / Researcher Comments

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## *E. Links with Parents, Family, and Community*

### E.1. Parents and family members feel welcome at all time

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] Every parent, family member, and child is greeted on arrival and acknowledged when they leave (e.g. a staff member may be assigned or takes responsibility for ensuring this).*
*[] Staff know parents by name and other family members who regularly visit the centre.*
*[] Parents feel free to enter the centre any time.*
*[] Staff actively encourage other family members to visit the centre (e.g."fathers' night")*

**Staff / Researcher Comments**

### E.2. Members of the community are involved

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] People from different community organizations, groups, and occupations are invited to the centre (e.g. gardener, traffic officer, netballer).*
*[] Community members are encouraged to participate (e.g. school children on work experience).*

Staff / Researcher Comments

### E.3. Outside professionals/organizations are used

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] A record is kept or the head staff member knows local specialists/agencies that can be called upon for assistance(e.g. for advising on staff inservice training, answering queries about a child's health or physical condition).*
*[] Where appropriate staff consult with and seek the help of outside agencies and professionals (e.g. if child abuse is suspected, or staff for example may refer parents to a specialist if they suspect that their child has a language development delay problem).*

Staff / Researcher Comments

### E.4. Parents informed about programme philosophy and practices

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] A brief written description of the centre's philosophy is available for parents to read.*
*[] If the centre is a chartered service a copy of the charter is available for parents to read and/or take home.*
*[] There is frequent communication about any changes in the centre, what is happening in the programme generally through methods such as regular newsletters, notice-boards and frequent notes.*

Staff / Researcher Comments

### E.5. Parent education

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] Parent education opportunities are provided and staff view parent education as part of their role (e.g. relevant literature for parents to read and/or take home, parent-workshops or seminars, various professionals from relevant fields are invited to speak to parents, etc).*

Staff / Researcher Comments

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### E.6. Staff consider parents to be joint partners

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] Staff seek to foster two-way communication with parents about home and centre practices.*

*[] Staff do not criticise parents child-rearing practices but where appropriate provide support (e.g. resources, gentle guidance, affirming comments)*

*[] Parents opinions and suggestions are listened to and respected by staff.*

*[] Staff recognize that they can form attachments with children without competing with parents.*

Staff / Researcher Comments

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### E.7. Parents contribute to decision-making

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] Formal opportunities are available for parents to participate in decision-making (e.g. parent representation at association or management level).*

*[] Parents are encouraged to make suggestions and pass on ideas to staff about matters relating to the programme and administration. Their input is, as much as possible, taken into consideration.*

Staff / Researcher Comments

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### E.8. Staff support parents

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

*[] Staff observe strict confidentiality regarding children and families, and parents know this.*

*[] Staff work cooperatively (where appropriate) with other professionals who are involved in helping families.*

*[] Where appropriate and wanted by families, extra assistance is provided (e.g. staff might offer to make/buy children's lunch to save parents time, staff might make arrangements for child care after hours).*

Staff / Researcher Comments

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### E.9. Reports on children's activities and progress

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

[] *There are verbal and written systems for sharing with parents what their children did during the day (e.g. sleep charts, list of child's main activities, description of child's achievements and pleasures in learning new skills).*

[] *Changes in a children's physical (e.g. child is off-colour) and emotional states (e.g. child may be particularly excited after a visit by a clown) are reported to parents.*

Staff / Researcher Comments

### E.10. Provisions for parents in the environment

| Not met | Partially met | Mostly met | Fully met |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

[] *A special space is set aside for parents to meet, rest, or wait. This space should have comfy chairs and be separate or separated off from the children's areas.*

[] *Off-street parking for parents, or more-or-less guaranteed car-parking space on the road immediately outside the centre, is available.*

[] *There are established places (which parents are informed about) for leaving children's belongings, notes to the staff, payment of fees/donations.*

Staff / Researcher Comments

CENTRE: ____________

DATE: ______________

## *QUESTIONS TO ASK STAFF RELATING TO CRITERIA THAT ARE NOT OBSERVED DURING THE VISIT OR ARE DIFFICULT TO OBSERVE*

**Question Number on the QRC**

A.3. How are new children and parents introduced and settled into the programme?

- in what ways are they each helped to become more familiar with it?
- when a new child starts how is the separation process made easier?

Prompts:

Ways are available for new parents to check on how their child is?
Centre's policy on children, particularly new children bringing a toy, cuddly or such like from home?
Children are told that their parents are leaving?
Children are told when to expect their parents to return?

A.4. How many children can attend at any one time? and what is the total number of children on your roll?

A.5. Do staff visit children and families at their homes?

- if no, would you and your staff like to and why, or why not?
- if yes, when are they visited (e.g. before starting at the centre)?
  - are all families visited or only some? If only some, why?
  - what is the main purpose of home visits?

A.8. What methods of discipline/punishment/behaviour management are used here?

- are children disciplined differently or are they disciplined the same depending upon the nature of their misbehaviour?
- are parents asked about what methods they use?
- is behaviour management at the centre discussed with parents?

B.6. On occasions when you or other staff are sick , have an infection or a disease would you still come to work? Do you feel obliged to? Why?

B.7. Is there any policy on children attending when they are sick?

- if yes, are parents made aware of this policy?
- what procedures do the staff follow when a child is sick?

B.8. If a child at the centre had lice (for example) or some kind of infection that could be passed on to other children what happens about informing parents and other parents?

- do you suggest names of health professionals and medical people to parents?

B.9. Do you have any children with any special health needs e.g. asthmatic, skin allergy? In what ways are their special health needs taken into account in the activities provided?

C.3. How do you know what the needs of the children are?

- how do you know what ways the programme/centre could meet family needs?

C.5. Do activities differ for younger and older children?

- in what ways? and why?

C.7. Are inside activities ever taken outside? Are outside activities ever taken inside?

- why?

C.9. Do you have any children with special needs?

- if yes, have any modifications to the building and environment been carried out?

- if no, would such children be accepted and would it be likely that modifications would be made?

C.10 In the last two months have there been any activities to help children learn and understand about other cultures, or about life-styles in other countries?

- if yes, what?

C.12. Are ethnic differences and differences in families values recognized in any way in the programme, or in staff practices?

- are there any ways that parents are asked in what ways the programme can support their family values?

C.13. Do you feel it is important to have any emphasis on non-sexist language and behaviour in the programme? In what ways?

C.15. In the last six months have the children been taken on an excursion? and are excursions for all children or just some of them?

Are outings included as part of the programme (e.g. to the dairy?)

- if yes, how frequently?
- and do all children go on outings or only some?

C.16 Is the programme assessed , evaluated or reviewed by yourself or anyone else in the centre

- if yes, for what purpose? when? who sees this information?
- what happens with the information?

D.6. To what extent is each member of staff involved in planning or deciding what should happen in the programme?

- do staff plan the programme together, and how often?

D.7. As director/head teacher/supervisor what is your leadership role in regard to the staff? (e.g. the nature of your relationship with them, your responsibilities for ensuring their good work)

D.8. Are any records of staff qualifications and any refresher training they do, kept?

- if yes, for what purpose?

D.9. Have any staff left in the last 12 months?

- how many? and, have they have been replaced?
- are staff employed on a temporary or a permanent basis?

D.10. Is it important for staff to be professional? (e.g. keep up to date with the research, belong to a professional association, be concerned about the quality of their practice, etc).

- does the centre or staff belong to any professional/representative organization?
- do staff make evaluative comments on each others work?
- and, are staff generally accepting of comments from each other?
- do staff ever articulate the goals and objectives of the programme to others? or, do you believe that they know and understand these enough to be able to tell others?
- are any staff involved in advocating for recognition as professionals and for the better status off early childhood education in society?

E.2. In the last two months have any people from the community been invited or involved in the programme?

E.3. Has outside professional assistance been made use of recently (e.g. have you sought advice on how to help a child with a motor-skill development delay?)

- is there any record or list keep of local agencies (e.g. ECDU) and professionals (e.g. psychologists) whom you could consult with if needed?

E.5. Is any form of parent education provided (i.e. do staff help parents to learn and understand more about child-rearing?)

- if no, should it be the role of the staff and the centre to do so?
- if yes, in what ways? and how effective are each of these ways? (e.g. participation rate)

E.7. What formal opportunities (if any) are there for parents to participate in decision-making?
Are parents encouraged to make suggestions and pass on ideas to the staff about the programme or about administration? and, what usually happens to these ideas and suggestions?

E.8. Are there any ways that support can be given to parents who are having problems, or is this not part of the centre's function ?
Are parents problems discussed or mentioned to other parents or people in the community?

**Staffing**

| | **Staff 1** | **Staff 2** | **Staff 3** | **Staff 4** | **Staff 5** | **Staff 6** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **First name** | | | | | | |
| **Position** | | | | | | |
| **D.3. Length of time at centre** | | | | | | |
| **D.3. Previous early childhood work experience** | | | | | | |
| **D.2. Parent** | yes/no | yes/no | yes/no | yes/no | yes/no | yes/no |
| **D.1. Early childhood training** | | | | | | |
| Completed and awarded | yes/no | yes/no | yes/no | yes/no | yes/no | yes/no |
| **D.8. Continuing education** | | | | | | |
| ECE tertiary level study | yes/no | yes/no | yes/no | yes/no | yes/no | yes/no |
| Recent inservice course | yes/no | yes/no | yes/no | yes/no | yes/no | yes/no |

CENTRE: ________________________________
PARENTS FIRST NAME: ______________________
CHILD'S NAME: ____________________________
CHILD'S AGE: ____________ ____________
HOW LONG SINCE CHILD STARTED: ____ yrs ____ mths

## *QUESTIONS TO ASK PARENTS RELATING TO CRITERIA THAT ARE NOT OBSERVED DURING THE VISIT OR ARE DIFFICULT TO OBSERVE*

**Question Number on the QRC**

A.4. Are you encouraged by the staff or by the policies of this centre (e.g. absence fee in childcare centres) to take your child every day that it is open?

A.5. Has someone on the staff visited you and your child at home? If yes, for what purpose?

B.7. What is the centre's policy (if any) on children attending when they are sick?

C.3. What ways are there for passing on information about your child's needs and the needs of your family to the staff?

- do staff talk with you about your child's needs?
- do staff talk with you about your family needs?
- in what ways (if any) do you feel that your child's needs are taken into account?

*For parents from ethnic groups other than NZ pakeha and Maori:*
C.12. Do you feel that the staff are sensitive to your cultural values and customs?

- do staff show respect for your values?

D.4. What words best sum up the personal characteristics of the staff in relation to their work and interactions with the children and with you?

E.1. Do you feel welcome in the centre?

- are you greeted by the staff? are you acknowledged when you leave? by your first name?
- are you encouraged to participate in the programme? in what ways?
- are parents invited to join in on special activities such as birthday parties or excursions?
- have you found that other family members (e.g. grandparents, brothers and sisters) are also welcome?

E.5. Have you ever been provided with any information or assistance to help in learning and understanding more about child-rearing? If yes, what?

E.6. Do the staff support two-way discussion of home and centre child-rearing practices?

- have you found that staff can be critical of your child-rearing practices
- are your opinions and suggestions regarding your child listened to and respected by staff?

E.9. Do you receive regular reports or information about your child

- your child's activities, behaviour, and progress?
- are they verbal or written reports?

How adequate do you feel the communication is?

- in what areas would you like more information?
- and how would you like this information to come to you (e.g. notes home)?

## APPENDIX 2(b)

Example of one section from a centre's QRC profile provided as feedback to the centre.

### PROGRAMME

**C.1. Written schedule**

1 2 [✓ 3] 4

No general timetable displayed, showing the main activities and set daily routines

There are, though, a number of specific schedules for particular routines and rooms

**C.2. Stimulating activities**

1 2 3 [✓ 4]

**C.3. Child and family needs**

1 2 3 [✓ 4]

Considerable effort is made to find out about children's and families needs e g home reports, child observations, planning meeting

**C.4. Play provisions**

1 2 3 [✓ 4]

**C.5. Appropriate activities**

1 2 3 [✓ 4]

**C.6. Child/staff activities**

1 2 3 [✓ 4]

**C.7. Indoor/outdoor activity**

1 2 [✓ 3] 4

Some gross-motor and outdoor type activities are inside

Some inside activities are taken outside

Outdoor play does not appear to always be accessible to children on fine days. Access depends upon staff decision to take children outside and whether there is already another age group outside

**C.8. Activity group-size**

1 2 3 [✓ 4]

**C.9. Special needs provision**

1 2 3 [✓ 4]

**C.10. Cultural awareness**

1 2 [✓ 3] 4

An awareness and commitment to promoting cultural awareness is evidenced in the programme and staff interactions, but there could be more emphasis on this in the programme through types of materials, toys, etc.

**C.11. Biculturalism**

1 2 [✓ 3] 4

To be commended on the effort being made towards incorporating Maori language, values and practices into the programme and centre operation.

(E.g. Maori + English posters, a fluent Maori speaker is on the staff, + incorporate Maori values such as the sharing of food)

**C.12. Family values/customs**

1 2 3 [✓ 4]

**C.13. Non-sexist programme**

1 2 3 [✓ 4]

Including: a parents' evening was organised to discuss issues of sexism in an early childhood programme

A male staff member is employed which would help to serve as a role model to children that men can be carers.

**C.14. Staff join in on play**

1 2 3 4

**C.15. Outings and excursions**

1 2 3 [✓ 4]

**C.16. Programme evaluation**

1 2 3 [✓ 4]

Director/supervisor have carried out performance evaluations on all staff and will discuss these with them. There are programme planning meetings which include programme evaluation and discussion of ways to improve on aspects of the programme. Feedback on this is often given to parents through newsletters + notices on the notice board.

*Appendix 3.*

**Below are excerpts from a letter written by Mark Laws as Chairperson for a Kohanga Reo whanau involved in the study to a group of twelve pakeha women who had officially complained to the Education Department about** Sarah Farquhar doing research on Te Kohanga Reo.

*"At a whanau hui held on 7 October 1991 and Monday 11 November 1991, it was unanimously decided to reply to the letter by (name of spokesperson for the complainants) addressed to Prof. Ted Glynn, Education Department University of Otago on the ethical issue of Pakeha institutions undertaking research on Te Kohanga Reo.*

***It is with some pity, sadness and anger that this Kohanga Reo whanau has to write to defend the credibility of Sarah Farquhar and Karina Laws, the Tino Rangatiratanga of this whanau their local and district units (Tino Rangatiratanga Units) of Te Kohanga Trust and the mana of our kuia Mrs Noi Hudson, against the unjustified attack and irresponsible actions made by your group towards all the people involved with the study, presentation and the paper "A Preferred Child Care Education Service: The Quality of Te Kohanga Reo" at the Early Childhood Convention held in Dunedin during September 1991".***

***"... what we see as the only true bicultural issue here; is firstly the partnership established between Sarah Farquhar (a Pakeha Student) and Karina Laws (a Maori mother), secondly between the Department of Education (Otago) and two Te Kohanga Reo (Otakou), then finally the partnership agreement between Te Kohanga Reo Trust and the Ministry of Education. ... (our Kohanga Reo) being one of the study subjects are at an advantage more so from the agreed partnership ...***

*1. Financial assistance - to employ K Laws (part-time for 1 year) as this is their recognition that a Maori should liaise and co ordinate the study from within both whanau being studied ...*

***2. The study methodology - if Sarah's study on Quality Early Childhood Education is to be properly represented by all the EC centres, then Te Kohanga Reo must surely have to be included in it, and because of this, it has added the Maori dimension and concept of education, which may have been detrimental to her study if it was not ...***

*3. Identification - because TKR is different, the study was moulded into a custom made Maori appropriate format, thus TKR was influencing some of Sarah's overall findings to take into account for that uniqueness which only TKR has, and surely that can only further substantiate the participation of the 2 TKR as a sample in the study, instead of none at all.*

*4. Resources - we accept that Sarah's overall study and report will be included in her thesis towards her PhD, but what is important for this whanau is that we will be acknowledged in receiving a copy, to utilise and implement the results, recommendations and conclusions for the further whanau learning and development, now and in the future.*

*5. Future implications - this is also the launching pad for further research and study initiatives into TKR; whether they be individual, local or on a national scale, as another Education Department student has already approached the whanau for permission to study the transition of our tamariki into Kura next year ...*

*6. Networking initiative - to reciprocate this study and future research by reporting and informing Te Kohanga Trust in the wider ramifications of TKR research as this was to be a model TKR research project in the making".*

*"These benefits are also seen by the TKR whanau in the study and by the local TRU as an important developmental issue, therefore to see it questioned, undermined and to be possibly lost, has caused some anxiety. You can all see why this whanau is upset, as it takes exception to the audacity of your group in firstly demanding that this paper be withdrawn during the EC Convention, by pre-empting and spoiling what we see as an important first step in TKR research, then for the letter to the Education Department after the convention had finished."*

*"Given that Maori are already bi-cultural in this country, it is therefore safe to say that this group was set up to target non Maori, and it seems ironical that when partnerships are formed they still have to account for their actions to these types of groups".*

*" ... we have given Sarah Farquhar our full blessing in including it in her study, the report to the Ministry of Education and her PhD, all because it is our decision to do so".*